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COMICS

THE GOLDEN AGE

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™

EDITED BY RON GOULART

NOSTALGIA ★ ADVENTURE ★ EXCITEMENT ★ HUMOR
SUB-ZERO ★ SPARKY WATTS ★ YARKO THE GREAT
PLASTIC MAN ★ CAT-MAN ★ SENORITA RIO ★ SLAM BRADLEY
COLE ★ FLESSEL ★ ROGERS ★ EVERETT ★ EISNER ★ BECK

COMICS THE GOLDEN AGE

EDITED BY RON GOULART

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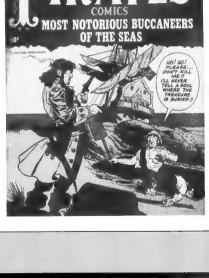

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EDITOR'S PAGE

While rummaging through the archives for material to reprint in this issue, I came across a bedraggled, coverless copy of what I've determined must be *Star Comics #1*. Since the cover date, if it had a cover, would be February, 1937, I suspect this is just about the earliest comic book I ever bought. I was just four years old, and already a real charmer, when this appeared on the newsstand. It's a hodgepodge of material from the Chesler shop, some godawful and some not so bad. There's funny stuff from Fred Schwab, Dick Ryan and Dick Moores. The adventure strips include *The Mad Goddess*, a jungle epic by Robert Louis Golden; *Dan Hastings*, a science fiction opus with two pages by Clemens Gretter and four by Fred Guardineer; *River Of Death*, another jungle epic, by Creig Flessel, who's the subject of our GA interview. *Star* isn't the most scintillating comic book I've ever encountered, but its contents must've been sufficient to hook me and start a lifelong addiction.

You'll notice we've done something unusual. Lowered the price and increased the number of pages. Every time this happens they lower my salary and cut down on the perks, so don't expect it to happen too often.

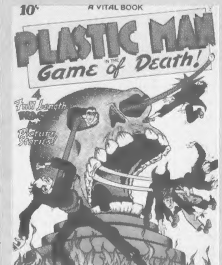
Detective fans got an extra thrill in our portfolio last issue from what might be called *The Mystery Of The Missing Page*. The second page of Fred Schwab's four page *Hemlock Shomes* feature was nowhere to be seen. If we get enough complaints, from people other than Schwab, we'll try to find the lost page and run it.

Jerry DeFuccio and I met through the mails nearly three decades ago. At the time I was a rising young copywriter in San Francisco and he was an associate editor at *MAD*. Just about no one on the face of the Earth knows more about comics of the Golden Age than Jerry and I'm pleased that I've been able to persuade him to become a regular contributor.

We intend next issue to commence a news page, giving information on reprints of GA material and so on. If you're involved with any such resurrections, send us press releases, sample copies or what-have-you.

Boody Rogers, the star of our *Funnymen* section, has penned his autobiography. Entitled *Homeless Bound*, it tells you one hell of a lot about his wild youth in various spots in Texas and about his Army life during World War II. There are also quite a few anecdotes about the cartooning life and some sample *Sparky Watts* strips. Send him $8.95 plus $1.50 and he'll send you a copy of the dang thing. His address is 205 4th St. S.E. Childress, TX 79201.

—Ron Goulart



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HERO ★★ PROFILE

If the Golden Age of Comics had anything it was heroes. Big heroes, little heroes, business-suited heroes and colorfully costumed heroes of every shape and coloration. This feature will profile one of the stars of the 1940s every issue.

PLASTIC MAN
by JACK COLE
TO OUR NEW READERS: IF YOU SHOULD SEE A MAN STANDING ON THE STREET AND REACHING INTO THE TOP WINDOW OF A SKY-SCRAPER ... THAT'S NOT ASTIGMATISM -- IT'S PLASTIC MAN!... IF YOU HAPPEN UPON A GENT ALL BENT UP LIKE A PRETZEL ... DON'T DUNK HIM -- IT'S PLASTIC MAN! ALL THIS AND BOUNCING, TOO, YOU'LL SEE WHEN THE RUBBER MAN AND HIS PAL, WOOZY WINKS, GAMBLE THEIR LIVES IN 1 —

Some years after he'd left the comic book field publisher Everett M. "Busy" Arnold was asked to name the feature he'd liked best among all those in his Quality line of magazines. "Although *Blackhawk* was our top money maker," he replied, "*Plastic Man* was my personal favorite." That was some three decades after the start of *Police Comics*, though, and Arnold was looking back through all that had happened since. In the summer of 1941 Jack Cole's shape-changing good guy had been just one of the dozen strips and fillers making up the contents of the latest Quality newsstand entry. Plastic Man started in business, very modestly, in the middle of the first issue. In spite of the increasing popularity of Cole's Midnight over in *Smash Comics*, his newest creation was not considered very important.

The intended *Police* money maker was "the mysterious figure who fights for justice as the Firebrand". He got the cover of the issue and an eleven page adventure right up at the front of the book. In civilian life the Firebrand was Rod Reilly, another of the millionaire playboys who turned crimefighting because of boredom w his ritz life. His costume consisted scarlet tights, bandana and mask, p a shirt that seemed to be made cellophane. When he's wearing "flaming garb", he looks more lik Gypsy violinist at a chichi restaur than a practicing superhero. Matte fact, the Firebrand has no super pow at all and brings only blind cour and some acrobatic skills to the job.

What saved this Wall St

PLASTIC MAN
THOSE MAY BE THE PLANS! - IT'S WORTH A TRY!
OINK!
HOPE I WASN'T WRONG!
I INSIST I AM WOOZY WINKS!
AND SO THE PLASTIC MAN!!
AND SO HE'S NAPOLEON... COME QUIETLY, BOYS!
PLASTIC MAN
by JACK COLE

dogooder from being a complete dud was the artwork on the early adventures. The Firebrand artist for the first nine issues was the formidable Reed Crandall. A talented man and a master of anatomy, Crandall endowed the rather stodgy stories with a bit more excitement and life than they actually deserved. I must add, though, that for me Crandall's work was always on the cold side. He lacked the flash and life of the top men who gave the real fire to the comic books of the early 1940s. Men like Jack Cole.

With Plastic Man Cole had a feature where he could make use of all the skills he'd been developing since hitting New York in the middle 1930s. His narratives mixed fantasy, cops and robbers, violence and humor. His drawing style, a blend of the straight approach and the exaggerations of animated cartoons, was ideally suited to depicting Plastic Man's bouncy gangbusting adventures. While the strip is sometimes referred to as a satire on other superguys, it wasn't really that at all. What Cole was turning out, in the first few years anyway, was closer to what was being done in the movies of the time. Studios such as Warner Brothers were especially adept at combining mystery and comedy in films starring the likes of Edward G. Robinson, Pat O'Brien and even Errol Flynn (*Footsteps In The Dark* is a mystery-comedy in which the dashing Flynn played a closet detective story writer). MGM did well in the screwball-adventure category, too, as various films teaming Clark Gable and Jean Harlow and William Powell and Myrna Loy illustrate. These movies, and many others like them, proved you could successfully combine the elements and Cole succeeded in doing that sort of thing in comics.

He wrote his own blurb for the initial yarn, proclaiming, "From time to time the comic world welcomes a new sensation! Such is PLASTIC MAN!! The most fantastic man alive! Vermin of the underworld shudder at the mention of his name! And yet he was once one of them! Now, read of how this incredible character came to be!" Like other Jack Cole characters Plas is a reformed criminal. Eel O'Brian by name, "the toughest gangster afoot... wanted by the police in eight states." While involved in a safecracking caper at a chemical works, acid gets spilled on him. Left to fend for himself by his gang ("Hey, ya putrid punks! Wait up!"), he wanders out of the city, "through swamps, then up a mountain side." He passes out and awakens later to find he's been taken in and cared for by a kindly monk who runs a peaceful mountain retreat. The monk's faith in him causes Eel to reform on the spot. Shortly after that he realizes the acid bath has given him the ability to stretch his body into all sorts of shapes. "What a powerful weapon this would be... AGAINST CRIME! I've been FOR it long enough! Here's my chance to atone for all the evil I've done!!" The monastery sequence, including the fantasy elements, must've been inspired by what happened to Edward G. Robinson in *Brother Orchid* the year before. Taken for a ride by his own gang, Robinson is shot and left to die. Instead he manages to make his way to a monastery. He is taken in and cared for and, after some backsliding, reforms. Robinson had a whole movie to do it in, Eel had to make the transition from rat to good guy in six pages.

Over the next few months Plastic Man had some rather unusual adventures. He broke up a narcotics ring that was smuggling dope across the Canadian border inside coffined corp-

ses, tangled for two issues with a gang of lesbian racketeers ("women of abnormal physical development bent on a city-wide protection shakedown.") led by a cigar-smoking lady known as Madam Brawn. In their final showdown the madam assumes Plas won't lay a hand on her. "I never strike a lady," he admits. "But you're no lady!!" Promptly he punches her on the snoot, she falls back onto a spike and is killed. By this time, issue #5, Plastic Man got his first cover on *Police*. He was drawn not by Cole, however, but by Gill Fox. Fox, who was associate editor and would soon graduate to editor, tells me that the Arnold practice at the time was to have the editor and associate editor do the covers on this title. Since Ed Cronin and Fox were both cartoonists, this worked out okay.

After Madam Brawn, Plas destroyed a pair of evildoing disembodied hands, outwitted a rather prosaic gang of jewel thieves and then beat a mad scientist who was causing death and desolation with the giant eight ball he traveled across the countryside in. With issue #9 (May, 1942) Plastic Man moved up to the front of the book and was given nine pages to cavort in. Arnold had found out, from newsstand response and reader letters, that it was Plastic Man and not Firebrand who was selling *Police Comics* and he acted accordingly. Inspired and elated by his promotion to the lead spot, Cole turned out his most complex and detailed job so far, in which Plastic Man tackles another mad scientist, a spider-like dwarf called Hairy Arms.

PAGE 10
PLASTIC MAN
SO I THINK MEBBE YOU AIN'T SLINKEY AT ALL— BUT PLASTIC MAN IN DISGUISE!
NOW WHAT IN THE WORLD EVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
THIS TOWN'LL TEAR YOU APART AS AN OUTSIDER! ....
I-I-I'M SLIPPERY! LOUDER!
SUDDENLY...
WELL AS I LIVE AND STRETCH!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? ... I THOUGHT I HEARD A CRY OF DISTRESS!
I--AWRRRK! Y-Y-YOUR NECK!!
MY NECK? WHAT ABOUT IT, CONSTABLE?
I--I--IT'S S-STRETCHED!
WHY, HOW ODD!
OFFICER, THIS MAN...
THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH MY NECK, CONSTABLE! SURE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN DRINKING?
SHADES OF NIGHT! WHOM IT'S YOUR L-L-LEG!
MY LEG ??
WHY, CONSTABLE ... IS THAT ANY WAY TO ADDRESS A YOUNG LADY?
HELP!! I'M LOSING MY MIND!

Part of the fun of Plastic Man was the disguises, the shape-changes he undertook in his pursuit of crooks and scoundrels. During his first few months on the job he transformed himself into, among other things, a giant flying squirrel, a quivering junkie, a snake, a plump matron, a firehose and a glamour girl. He also stretched, shrunk, bounced, rolled like a hoop and squeezed through keyholes. All the while he was also spying on the underworld as Eel O'Brian. In his redsuit, darkglasses phase Plas was allowed to work on the police force, but a source of constant frustration was the standing order to arrest and bring in Eel O'Brian. Cole never did figure out a way to resolve this dilemma and in the second year he simply dropped the dual identity.

With issue #11 the Spirit began appearing in *Police*, the monthly stories were reprints of the weekly Sunday paper inserts. Eisner's masked man, already a proven winner, was going to provide some competition. Perhaps with this in mind, Cole did his most impressive story to date for that same issue. The splash page shows London in the 17th Century, with a coach-and-four rattling across a stone bridge in the foreground. Behind this looms the head of a giant who is rippin building in half as Plastic Man co stretching out of his gaping mouth strike at him. The plot has to do wi scientist of 1642, suspected of bei warlock, who is destroyed by gigantic ape he has created. Buried brain does not die. "Years pass... brain lives on tho' all else rc Finally, all traces of his grave van The undying brain swears, "Curse world!! If ever I am freed from living death, I'LL KILL EVERY M ALIVE!!"

Freed the brain is in 1942 and t planted into the skull of a gravel jured American Army flyer. Alth

IT WILL IF YOU FEED THE FROG A LITTLE STEEL BUCK-SHOT!
PRETTY CLEVER! YOU DON'T MIND IF CHARLIE DROPS IN TO SEE IT, DO YOU? — CHARLIE'S MY CHIEF BOUNCER!
MY!... SO HE IS!!
???
P-P-PLASTIC MAN!!!
NOW, WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
TONY!! MIKE!! QUICK!!!

the body, crippled now, is that of young Tad Wilkins, it is controlled by the brain of the vengeful scientist. Back in the United States, he resumes his experiments and succeeds in turning himself into a giant. His fiancee summons Plastic Man and when he reaches the Wilkins home he finds both of Tad's parents crushed to death, their broken bodies sprawled in the imprints of gigantic hands. Since his gigantic body is crippled from the waist down, Tad is walking on his huge hands. He makes his wild way through the city, crushing and mangling everything he touches. Cole has able to take a basically humorous image, that of a man walking on his hands, and turn it into something frightening. After using the fiancee to lure Tad into a trap, Plastic Man is swallowed by the giant. "I'LL EAT YOU ALIVE!!" he roars. But Plas swells up inside him, cuts off his air and kills him. "In death, the giant changes to normal size and is laid to rest next to his parents. BUT...". We are then allowed to eavesdrop on what the still living brain is thinking. It vows that someday it'll "rise again to plague all the world!!"

The artwork on this episode is exceptional and there's an intensity Cole hadn't achieved before. The content, for a 1942 comic book narrative, is unusual. Especially for a story written by an amiable, easygoing young fellow some people thought of as an overgrown Boy Scout. Gill Fox was editing the magazine by this time and he still remembers the impression this particular story made on him. "When I saw that first page, I knew Jack had arrived. There'd be no stopping him."

At the beginning of Plastic Man's second year Cole gave him a sidekick. In *Police* #13 (November, 1942) Woozy Winks, who looks something like the then popular movie comedian Lou Costello, made his entrance. As a result of saving a wizard's life, Woozy is granted invulnerability and finds that nothing, from a bonk on the head with a hammer to a plunge off a high cliff, can harm him. The wizard's magic word, by the way, is "Shadroe", indicating that Cole was following C.C. Beck's Captain Marvel. After using his gift of invulnerability to commit a few crimes Woozy, too, reforms and joins up with Plastic Man. From this point on the stories take on more humor. And fairly soon Plas ceases to work for the police and becomes instead an FBI agent.

The growing success of Plastic Man increased Cole's work load. With *Police* #17 he took on the drawing of the covers, a task he kept for the next couple of years. The Plas stories were stretching, too, going from eleven pages to thirteen. By 1943 the adventures took up the first fifteen pages of each issue. This meant Cole's India rubber man had more room than most any other superhero of the era. Over in *Action* Superman had only thirteen, likewise Batman in *Detective*. 1943 was also the year the first complete book of Plastic Man was issued. Cole wrote and drew four stories, a total of fifty four pages, and also provided the cover. For new readers he prefaced the first yarn, *The Game Of Death*, with some words about his flexible hero. "If you should see a man standing on the street and reaching into the top window of a sky-scraper... that's not astigmatism... it's PLASTIC MAN! All this and bouncing, too, you'll see when the rubber man and his pal, WOOZY WINKS, gamble their lives in: The Game of Death."

This book was published not by Quality but by an outfit called Vital Books. Vital was actually a printer named Julian Proskauer. This was wartime, paper was rationed, and Proskauer happened to have a newsprint quota. Deciding he'd do better publishing comics and paper backs than his usual fare, he went out and licensed Plastic Man, the Spirit and Nick Carter. There was a second Plas magazine in 1944. Arnold took over and put out *Plastic Man* #3 in 1946.

The increased demands on Cole meant that he couldn't put as much time into each story as he once did. You'll notice, if you follow Plastic Man from, say, *Police* #13 through *Police* #24, that Cole keeps simplifying his work. The backgrounds become sparer, the shading and noodling all but vanish. His sense of design and his gift for laying out a story smoothly and

inventively remain, but less care is being taken. Cole also began having serious deadline problems. According to his brother Dick, there'd always been something of a problem. "Jack loved to procrastinate," he once recalled. "He would goof off most of the month then work night and day to get the work done. Mostly he would draw all night long."

In *Police* #20 (July, 1943) you can actually see Jack Cole working away by night to meet his Plastic Man deadlines. He puts himself as a character into this odd dream fantasy story. Plas is incapacitated and Woozy decides to bring the guilty parties to justice. Needing an artist to draw portraits of the crooks, he decides to try hiring Cole for the job. After some dickering, Cole agrees to do the job for a buck in cash. He doesn't flatter himself in this particular self-portrait. He appears as a lanky, sharpnosed and chinless chap with a pot belly. And, as noted earlier, he suffers from a severe stutter. At one point, when he and Woozy fall into the clutches of the bad guys, he's asked, "And who might you be?"

"I muh-MIGHT be Ga-Ga-GRETA Ga-Ga-GARBO, But I AM JACK COLE... Heh, heh."

"So what?"

"So I was b-bu-born in N-N-New Castle, P-Pa., on D-D-D-December 14, 1914. I'M twenty eight... M-m-my wife s-says I'M the buh-best c-c-c-c-cartoonist afoot! P-p-p-publishers b-beg for MY s-services! I write MY own stories, t-too... I'M super!... I'M s-swell! I'M, I'M, I'M, I'M, etc. etc..."

It's interesting to wonder if this is really how Cole thought of himself during the most successful period of his cartooning career so far.

PAGE 14
PLASTIC MAN
COME AND GET IT, BOYS!
TSK-TSK!... AND YOU GUYS ARE SLATED TO BE TOUGH!
I'M A LITTLE MIXED UP ABOUT THAT GUSTING AND MURDER STORY!... SUPPOSE YOU EXPLAIN!
ATTA PLAS!
LET'S GIT!! TAIN'T NO USE FIGHTIN' PLASTIC MAN!
LYNCHERS ARE THE MOST UNSOCIABLE PEOPLE IN THE WORLD!
DON'T HANG US, PLASTIC MAN!... TWERENT OUR IDEA TO LYNCH THESE MEN! DAINE LED US HERE!
13

Gill Fox, when he was editing *Police*, experienced difficulties with Cole's lateness. Arnold had moved the Quality offices to Stamford, Connecticut, which was nearer his home in Greenwich. Cole and his wife relocated in Stamford shortly thereafter. Fox often had to walk from the Gurley Building over to the Cole residence to nudge his friend into finishing a job. He especially remembers one such occasion. "Jack was renting the ground floor of a Victorian, a big house painted grey. I remember ringing the doorbell and there was a bow window on my right... I kept ringing and knocking and nobody answered. And as I turned to go away, out of the corner of my eye I saw somebody watching me from behind the curtains. It was Jack... can't explain that. I was a friend of his, socially and otherwise, but he pretended not to be home because of that deadline."

Veteran cartoonist Creig Flessel, w
became a close friend of Cole's met
because of another missed deadl
Cole and his wife were living on L
Island at the time, in the middle 19
and Flessel got a phone call from
Guardineer. Guardineer was one of
Quality regulars and Arnold
phone him because he was concer
about not being able to reach any
at Cole's home. Guardineer sugge
that, since Flessel lived a lot close
Cole than he did, he go over and
what was wrong. Flessel obliged
discovered that Cole, seriously be
schedule, had simply taken the p
off the hook.

The increasing amount of p
needed plus the growing dea
troubles precipitated the situation
upset Cole considerably for aw
Busy Arnold decided to bring in
artists and writers to work on P
Man. Today it's a rare cartoonist
scripts, letters, pencils and inks a
Then it was more common and

prided himself on being able to do everything. He didn't like anyone else meddling his work or having anything to do with his characters. But like nearly all his contemporaries, with the exception of Eisner and a few others, Cole had no control over the strips he'd created. Plastic Man belonged to Arnold, as did Midnight and all the rest. From a financial point of view Cole wasn't doing badly. He got the highest page rates around and bonuses of as much as $2,500 every so often. Considering that he didn't own anything he did, he was thriving.

The first artist to fill in seems to have been Bart Tumey. An early contributor to DC, Tumey also did a lot of work for Quality. He was a good, if not overly imaginative, artist who had a pleasant, cartoony style. He began doing stories in the Plastic Man comic book. By around 1947, although Cole was still doing many of the *Police* and *Plastic Man* covers, Arnold had a staff at work turning out imitation Cole. The best men to turn their hand to this were Alex Kotzky and John Spranger. Kotzky had been in comics since 1940 and had done some excellent work on such Quality features as *Manhunter* and *Espionage*. He'd also worked for Eisner as an inker on the Spirit and had known Cole since 1942. They were friends and apparently Cole didn't resent his working on Plastic Man. Kotzky tells me he considers Jack Cole just about the best cartoonist who was in the business at the time. He studied his work, concentrated on drawing as much like him as he could when he was doing Plas. In Kotzky's opinion it was Spranger who did the best Cole imitations. Another grad of the Eisner Spirit works, Spranger drew the *Saint* newspaper strip and then dropped out of cartooning some years ago.

Plastic Man was bounced from *Police* after #102 (October, 1950). The magazine itself continued for three more years, purveying crime and private eye yarns. The *Plastic Man* magazine limped along until 1956, but Cole had given up the character long before that to become a very successful gag cargiven up the character long before that to become a very successful gag cartoonist for *Playboy*. From time to time there have been attempts to revive Plas. None were successful, for the simple reason that Jack Cole was the only one who knew how to do him just right.

THE GOLDEN AGE interview

CONDUCTED BY RON GOULART

Born in 1912, Creig Flessel has been drawing comics for nearly a half century. His work can currently be seen in Playboy *and he did his first comic book stuff for Major Nicholson's pioneering original material titles of the 1930s—*More Fun, New Adventure, Detective. *He created* Pep Morgan, Speed Saunders *and* Steve Conrad, *and drew* Sandman *and* The Shining Knight. *He did numerous handsome covers for DC and also did work for the earliest issues of* Crime Does Not Pay. *One of the most successful advertising strip artists of the 1940s, he turned out comic section ads for Ralston, Royal Crown Cola, General Foods, Bulova, etc. He assisted on the* Dixie Dugan *strip, once lent Roy Crane a hand on* Buz Sawyer *and drew the* David Crane *strip for several years. Our interview was conducted in late May of this year.*

CREIG FLESSEL

C:GA: Did you work in pulp magazines first?

FLESSEL: That's right. I went to New York in the middle Thirties. Got out of art school... I went to Grand Central and also Pratt. I got doing stuff for Street & Smith. I did *The Shadow*... and I also did stuff for Popular Publications, *Adventure*. For the whole bunch of them.

C:GA: Were you born in the New York area?

FLESSEL: Born right where I am now. Huntington, Long Island. About three inches from where I'm sitting. Haven't moved a bit.

C:GA: How'd you get into the comic book business?

FLESSEL: I think there was an ad in the New York *Times*. Vincent Sullivan, of course, and Whitney Ellsworth and Major Nicholson.

C:GA: You knew Nicholson, right?

FLESSEL: Oh, sure. Now there's a colorful person, very colorful.

C:GA: You kept working for him, so I assume he paid you. Unlike many of his contributors.

FLESSEL: Well, I figured all the comics were a fly-by-night thing at that time. So I figured I'd sit right there and do it, so I made a space in the office. I was there with Sullivan and Ellsworth. And the major, he was in and out, being chased by process servers. He had a cane, wore spats and a beaver hat and a camel's hair coat, carried a briefcase. You knew he was with the expeditionary force that went into Russia. And he married a lady in waiting to the Queen of Sweden.

C:GA: You knew that if you stuck around the office you'd get paid?

FLESSEL: Yes, I was on a salary arrangement. And I also got to see everybody who came in... Siegel and Shuster, a couple of kids from Cleveland with this idea of theirs. And everybody said, "That's for the birds. Who believes in a guy who wears a cape and goes into a phone booth to change his pants?"

C:GA: Who else?

FLESSEL: Shelly Mayer. And I remember Gill Fox coming by and Leo O'Mealia.

C:GA: Did you write your own scripts?

FLESSEL: Everybody wrote his own stuff, mainly, at that time. I wrote all mine—*Steve Conrad, Hanko the Cowhand, Pep Morgan, Speed Saunders*. I guess the thing I'm best remembered for is the covers.

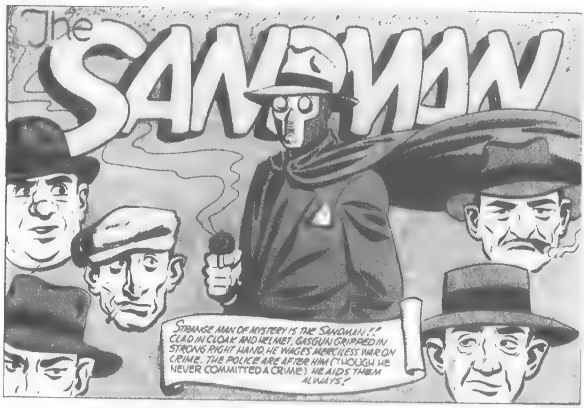
C:GA: How'd you get the assignment?

FLESSEL: Just being there. You know, they needed somebody and they didn't have any money. They said come up with an idea. Now my early ideas were warmed over Norman Rockwell. Kids fishing and so on. That was the state of the art at the time.

C:GA: Did you get extra pay for the covers?

No. 29 AUGUST, 1938

NEW Adventure COMICS


The SANDMAN
STRANGE MAN OF MYSTERY IS THE SANDMAN!!" CLAD IN CLOAK AND HELMET, GASGUN GRIPPED IN STRONG RIGHT HAND, HE WAGES MERCILESS WAR ON CRIME. THE POLICE ARE AFTER HIM (THOUGH HE NEVER COMMITTED A CRIME!) HE AIDS THEM ALWAYS!

FLESSEL: Yeah, think I got ten dollars a cover.

C:GA: Before* Detective Comics *came out, that was the first one with a real theme, did you all sit around and plan it?

FLESSEL: Well, what they used to do was think up titles. That I do remember. *Action, Detective, Sock, Bam...* all they could think of and then get them copyrighted.

C:GA: When the major was there, what did he do editorially?

FLESSEL: He didn't have much to do with that. That was Whit, the brains, and Vin. They put the thing together.

C:GA: There was an artist who signed himself Sven Elven. Did you know him?

FLESSEL: Oh, yeah. Seven Eleven, that wasn't his real name. I can't remember what it really was. He was a character, lived upstate on a farm. Came in with these big boots on.

C:GA: Older man?

FLESSEL: No, he was... well, I was in my early twenties and he must've been in his thirties.

C:GA: Did you know Tom Hickey?

FLESSEL: Sure, Tom Hickey and Billy Ely.

C:GA: Did they work in the office?

FLESSEL: No, I was the only one who worked there.

C:GA: That was on Fourth Avenue?

FLESSEL: Yes, Fourth in the Twenties.

C:GA: When DC took over and ousted the major, did you move?

FLESSEL: We all went uptown.

C:GA: When you did the Sandman... do you remember who wrote those?

FLESSEL: I did some of them, and some were written by Gardner Fox.

C:GA: The first guy who drew Sandman was Bert Christman. Did you know him at all?

FLESSEL: Yeah, I met him before he went with General Chenault and the Flying Tigers. He was a great artist, had a great flair. A tough act to follow.

C:GA: Then you did the Shining Knight.

FLESSEL: I don't remember much about that, because I was getting more and more into advertising.

C:GA: You never signed those because....

FLESSEL: I don't know why. Except I didn't have much belief in comics.

C:GA: When Vincent Sullivan left DC to start* Big Shot Comics, *did you go with him?

FLESSEL: That was strictly freelance.

C:GA:: You did covers....

FLESSEL: I did Charlie Chan on a couple of them. And I did Jibby Jones inside.

***C:GA: You also worked with Biro at the start of* Crime Does Not Pay.**

FLESSEL: Charlie and I, yes, he and I did a few jobs together.

C:GA: How did you get in contact with him?

FLESSEL: Charlie and I knew each other... maybe he had come into Nicholson downtown. I knew him and Bob Wood...There was one night I sat up with Charlie and Wood and Irving Watanabe and we pretty near killed ten pages. That was a mistake, getting a reputation for working fast.

***C:GA: You did actual strips for* Boys' Life?**

FLESSEL: Yeah, I did the original Bible stories that Novick, I think, eventually took over.

C:GA: Looking back, what's your general feeling about the years you spent in comic books?

FLESSEL: It was a lot of fun, I met a lot of nice guys. But I didn't believe I had any future in it. The type of thing I wanted to do was not big foot and it wasn't the Milton Caniff adventure stuff either. I wanted to do something in between, which there wasn't much of a place for. I guess I never really believed in the comic books.

C:GA: A question crosses my mind. Years ago did you have anything to do with Roy Crane? Any ghosting?

FLESSEL: I can tell you a story about that, yes.

C:GA: There's a brief period on* Buz Sawyer *that looks like you.

FLESSEL: Well, I never actually did it. But I got a call from Sylvan Byck, who was the assistant to Ward Greene at that period. "Come over, we've got something." So I put down what I was doing at Johnstone & Cushing and went over to

A MIGHTY CRASH RES-
THE CRIPPLED PLANE FALLS, DRAGGING DOWN A SECOND WITH IT!
THE SHINING KNIGHT HAS BAGGED TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE
OH WINGED VICTORY— THAT I MAY CLIP THE WINGS FROM THE LAST CARRION CROW
HIS BLADE BRANDISHED HIGH ABOVE HIS HEAD, THE VICTORIOUS KNIGHT OF THE SKIES TILTS AT FULL GALLOP UPON THE THIRD SKY PIRATE!
THAT DOES IT!
RIP!
AWK! NOW HE'S AFTER ME! HE'LL KILL ME!
FROM HIS HEADQUARTERS IN THE HARBORING HE-COOTER, THE FRANTIC BOGGART VIEWS THE ROUT OF HIS MINIATURE AIR ARMADA!

King Features. Crane was in town and they'd set up an office there for him and he was trying to come up with a week of work. And they needed somebody to do the pencilling and help him. So this is in the morning and Crane didn't have anything written. So we just sit there and finally Ward Greene comes in and says, "I know what's the matter with you guys. You need some food." So three martinis and a lunch later we're back in the office again trying to work. We still didn't get anything and eventually Crane asks me to come over to his hotel with him. We go over to the hotel and sit around there. His wife says, "I know what's the matter with you guys, you need something to eat." Three martinis and a dinner later we're back at the hotel. Meantime Crane is going out of his head trying to come up with an idea and I'm not helping. Time goes and maybe we did one strip. He finally says, "You're not doing any good here, you might as well leave." I told him my last train had left. He told me to go to bed. I wake up the next morning and Crane's still sitting there, still without an idea. And that was my one encounter with the strip.

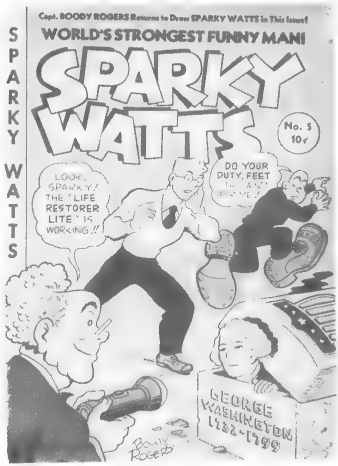
My high school senior class was selecting a class motto. The superintendent had chalked his suggestions on the blackboard. I couldn't get excited at all about "Hitch Your Wagon To A Star", or "Excelsior", so I stood up and nominated "When In Doubt, Eat Ham and Eggs!" That made the superintendent mad as hell, but when we voted, my motto carried 100 percent.

—Boody Rogers

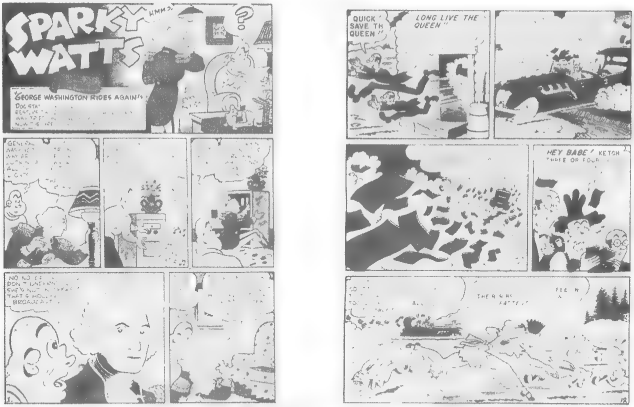
BOODY ROGERS

Gordon "Boody" Rogers is an outgoing, gregarious man who earned a goodly amount of his ham and eggs with his pen. He worked in comic books before the Golden Age had ever begun, helped draw one of the most successful adventure strips of the Thirties and Forties and created a character who deserves a place in the front rank of those who practice the noble profession of mock heroics in newspaper strips and comic books.

Rogers was born in 1904 in the Oklahoma Territory and reared in Texas. "I first thought of being a cartoonist as soon as I was big enough to hold a pencil," he recalls. "The first laugh at my work, that I can remember, was when I was in the first grade in Electra, Texas. The teacher sent some of us to the blackboard to add 2 and 2 or something, but instead I drew a guy sitting on a barbed wire fence. All the kids laughed—the teacher didn't think it was funny and chewed my rear down to the size of a grape." Undaunted, he kept at his cartooning. His work first saw print in his high school yearbook. "Then I was art editor of the University of Arizona *Kity Kat*—and *College Humor*, a mag in New York, reran some of my cartoons and paid a buck per column inch. To pad the fee I drew a guy sitting on top of a cliff trying to hit a cuspidor in the canyon below. It was two columns wide and six inches deep. Damned if they didn't pick it up and send me $12."


Capt. BOODY ROGERS Returns to Draw SPARKY WATTS in This Issue!
WORLD'S STRONGEST FUNNY MAN!
SPARKY WATTS
No. 5
10¢
SPARKY WATTS
"LOOK, SPARKY! THE "LIFE RESTORER LITE" IS WORKING!"
DO YOUR DUTY, FEET TO ANY PLACE!
GEORGE WASHINGTON 1732-1799
BOODY ROGERS

The late 1920s found Rogers in



Chicago, studying at the Academy of Fine Arts. It was there that he first met fellow Oklahoman Zack Mosley. The two, both proteges of the *Trib*'s Carey Orr, became close friends, scuffling and rooming together. Their friendship has lasted well over a half century and Rogers worked on Mosley's *Smilin' Jack* during the years when it was a hit. But before he settled down as Mosley's co-pilot, Rogers accomplished several other things. "I went to New York in 1928. My first art work was tracing my feet on cardboard and cutting them out and placing them in my shoes to plug the holes. I started selling a few cartoons to *Life*, *Judge*, *Collier's Film Fun* and anyone who would buy. Then come *The Funnies*...".

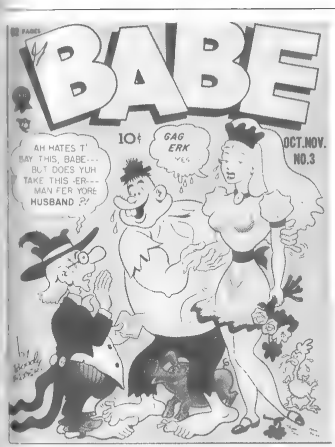
Boody Rogers was a comic book pioneer. He worked on both George Delacorte's *The Funnies* in 1929 and Major Nicholson's *New Comics* in the middle 1930s. It was these venturesome and low paying publications that served as the foundation for the entire comic book industry. For the fairly shortlived Dell tabloid Rogers drew *Deadwood Gulch*, *Rock Age Roy*, *Sancho and the Don* and *Campus Clowns*. For Nicholson he did similar

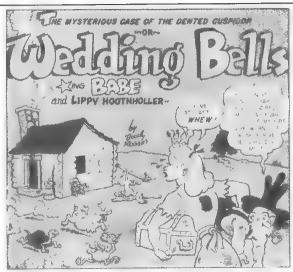
stuff. During the late Twenties and early and middle Thirties he also turned out a complete book of *Deadwood Gulch* for Dell (a cardboard covered black and white in the then familiar Cupples & Leon format), ghosted Frank Beck's *Gas Buggies* strip, lettered *Dumb Dora* (this while sharing a room with the strip's artist Bill Dwyer), did coloring on the *Winnie Winkle* Sunday pages, drew strips for a one-shot pulp magazine named *Boy's Adventures* and "anything to make ham and eggs."

When the Chicago Tribune-New York News syndicate decided, in 1936, that there ought to be a *Smilin' Jack* daily to go with the Sunday, Zack Mosley asked his old friend to lend a hand. Rogers working with Mosley in his Long Island studio, was associated with the aviation strip during its heyday. The years in which Jack first encountered the likes of Downwind, Fat Stuff and the Head, first grew his Gable-like moustache and began his interrupted marches to the altar with various de-icers.

During his tenure with Mosley, Rogers again got the urge to draw a strip of his own. He'd tried *Possum Holler* in the middle 1930s, a hillbilly feature that included Treetop Timmons, a fellow who was so tall his head never appeared in the panels. The McClure Syndicate had been interested in that one, but had absolutely no luck in selling it. Rogers did better with his next strip, which took a comedy approach to the notion of a superhero. He sold *Sparky Watts* to the Frank Jay Markey Syndicate. Markey was an executive at the McNaught Syndicate and his outfit functioned as a sort of subsidiary. *Sparky Watts*, a daily only, made its initial appearance on Monday, April 29, 1940, in roughly forty newspapers around the country. At that time Sparky's sole competition on the comics pages was Superman himself.

When we first meet Sparky, he is working his way through college by selling magazine subscriptions. Exposure to a cosmic ray machine turns



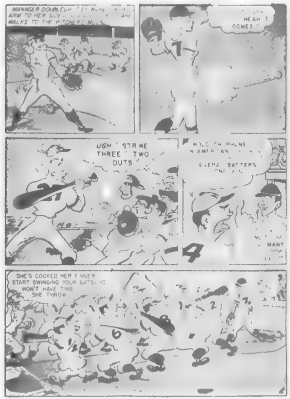


him into the strongest man on Earth. During his subsequent newspaper career he sabotaged Nazi submarines by tying knots in their periscopes, defeated a fishfaced master villain known as the Shark, singlehandedly laid an oil pipeline from Texas to New York, discovered the only way he could shave his super beard was with a blowtorch, kidnapped Hitler right out of Germany (or so he thought), shrank down to the size of a spec when his cosmic ray charge wore off, played professional baseball (he first had to overcome a tendency to throw the ball so high it came down with ice on it), joined the Air Corps and then had trouble explaining why he wouldn't be needing a plane.

The regulars in *Sparky* included Doc Static, inventor of the cosmic ray machine which transformed Sparky (the machine looked suspiciously like an old box camera with a big lightbulb screwed on top, but the darn thing obviously worked); Slap Happy, an expug whose feet became immense after an accidental cosmic ray treatment; Yoo Hoo, a Chinese war orphan who came to share the menage. There were also abundant examples of the Boody Roger's version of your basic de-icer, ladies who usually exceeded the Mosley specifications in the bosom department. Sparky had a lot of problems with women. Almost all of them fell in love with him, but due to his super strength he couldn't risk kissing one without fear of breaking her jaw. Like his inkwell cousin, Smilin' Jack, Sparky always had a devil of a time getting to the altar. In fact, he never was able to bring off the marriages he strived for.

Besides concerning himself with the social life of the superhero, Rogers was one of the few who gave serious thought to the theory of flight. How do most supermen fly? By magic apparently. They leap out of a window or off a rooftop and go sailing into battle. Clearly this is impossible under the known laws of physics. Superman, in his early days, didn't even claim to be able to fly. He was just a dandy jumper, "able to leap tall buildings at a single bound". Short of some super flatulance, that's about the only way any of those costumed crusaders could've done it. Unless they used the Sparky Watts method, which was to flap your arms like a bird. Unlike all the other super guys, Sparky never took off his mild mannered glasses when he was doing good deeds. He never had a costume either, preferring to work and fight evil in slacks, sweater and tie. Once he did dress up like a chicken as part of a sub chasing escapade.

Comic strip heroes, much like people, most often die unexpectedly. The heroine is going over the falls in a barrel on Saturday and come Monday she's not in the paper at all; the hero falls into a pit of vipers one Sunday and you're invited to return next Sunday for *The Secret Of The Incas!*, but he doesn't keep the date. Only rarely is there enough warning so that an Alfred Andriola can allow his Charlie Chan to bid all his newspaper readers a most cordial farewell or for a somewhat disgruntled Bob Lubbers to have his Robin Malone fall out of a penthouse. Boody Rogers was one of those who had advance warning that the end was approaching. He'd been drafted and the strip wasn't going to continue. So it was that in the spring of 1942 Sparky is trapped in a Nazi sub, the crew is wiped out but the sub is sinking and Sparky's super powers seem to have deserted him. As the water laps at his chin, he says, pretty philosophically under the circumstances, "I always hoped I'd say something original at a time like this... but as another American once said, 'I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country'." On that bleak day newspaper readers around the land must've mur-


MANAGER DOUBLES!!
HEAVY COMES
UGH! STRIKE THREE TWO OUTS!
SHE'S COOKED HER IT WHEN I START SWINGING YOUR BAT SO HO WON'T HAVE TIME SHE THROW

OUCH!! STRIKE ONE!!
THAT'S ENOUGH! IT'S NO USE!! WE'LL CONCEDE THE NEXT TWO STRIKES OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO HOLD YOU SCORELESS THIS LAST INNING!!
THEY'RE NOT GOING TO PUNT TO HER... THEY'RE
HOW THEY CAN KEEP HER FROM STEALING HOME
SHAD UP!
SHHH!

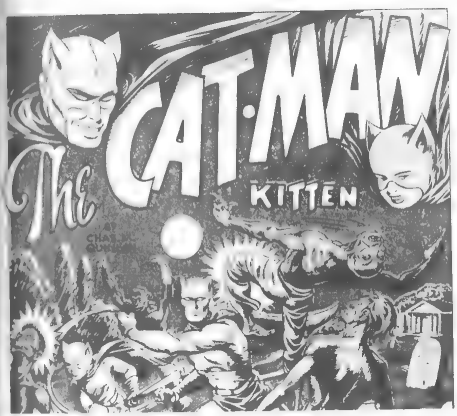
mured, "Mother of mercy, is this the end of Sparky Watts!" Thanks to comic books it wasn't.

Back in the spring of 1941 *Big Shot Comics* (owned in part by Markey) had begun reprinting the strips in four and six page chunks. When in the December, 1943 issue of *Big Shot*, that final panel by Rogers appeared, new material followed. In a tacked on sequence, drawn by Morris Weiss, Sparky survives and even gets his powers back. So that when Boody Rogers came home from the wars in the middle 1940s Sparky was still alive and well. Even years in the hands of second rate cartoonists couldn't kill him. Rogers resumed drawing his adventures and turned out twenty-seven new six-page episodes for *Big Shot*, along with six original material issues of *Sparky Watts* magazines. Sparky's postwar career was even more flamboyant than the one he'd had on the comics pages, involving him with Amazons, giant bugs, reanimated mummies, crazed inventors and nuclear holocaust. Rogers took none of those problems seriously.

The final issue of *Big Shot* was #104 and it came out in the summer of 1949. This time Sparky was left in the middle of an adventure, once again trying to get a lady to the altar. The tenth and last issue of *Sparky Watts* also hit the stands in 1949, but Boody Rogers was not quite through with comic books. A year earlier he'd started doing *Babe* for the folks who also published *Prize Comics*. The beautiful blonde Babe, AKA the Darling of the Hills, had most of her adventures in a world that mixed the hillbilly elements of Rogers' earlier *Possum Holler* (samples of which, by the way, saw print in *Sparky Watts* #2 under the title *Tree-Top Timmons*) and the fantasy of Sparky. She was also a crackerjack baseball player. Her magazine expired in the spring of 1950. In the next to the last issue Sparky Watts, accompanied by Doc Static and Slap Happy, made a final appearance in a crowd scene. 1949 and 1950 also found Rogers writing and drawing three issues of *Dudley*. Although billed as "The Teenage Sensation!" Dudley failed to catch on.

Boody Rogers left comic books after this. For some years he ran an art supply store in Phoenix, Arizona, whereat he claims he made more money than he ever did drawing. He's retired now, living in Texas and will always be remembered as the creator of the World's Strongest Funnyman.

Second Banana. Not every hero hits it big. Many interesting and exciting characters never really headline their own titles although they may gain devoted followings. This feature will take a look at one of the minor characters that populated the comic books of the 1940s.

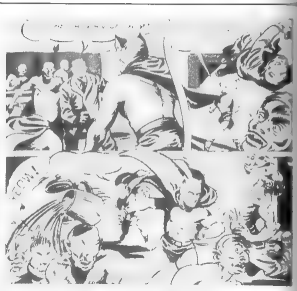


Even though he had nine lives, Cat-Man lasted only six years as a comic book superhero. Not a bad run in a field where most heroes' lifespans matched those of butterflies, but nowhere long enough to put him up there with the top bananas.

He started prowling in the #4 issue of *Crash Comics* (September, 1940), a publication he shared with such negligible characters as Strongman, Secret Agent Z-2 and Jane Drake, Detective. The contents of *Crash* were provided by a small shop run by Bert Whitman, who managed to round up contributions from such artists as Jack Kirby and George Storm. The Cat-Man origin story looks to have been drawn by Whitman himself with a possible assist from Irwin Hasen. In it we are told how young David Merrywether, after his scientist father as well as his mother and sister are slaughtered in deepest India by "jungle wild men", is taken off and reared by a motherly tiger. What happens as a result of that is nothing short of magical—"Through years of jungle association David is endowed with all the faculties of the cat family, to which tigers belong. He can see in the dark, leap from trees and buildings. His eyes glow and light up in the darkness." Better yet, he also has nine lives.

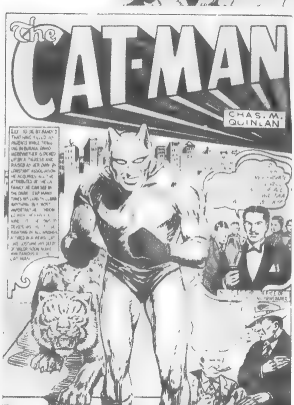
The prose describing Merrywether's decision to become a costumed crimefighter is so splendid that we quote most of it here. "His return to the world we live in finds him a disappointed addition. The evils of the world scar his sense of righteousness, so that he decides to devote his life to combating evil... Due to his marvelous exploits, he becomes known as the CAT MAN." You'll note that at this early stage of his career there's not yet a hyphen in his name. His earliest costume combined Batman's cowl with Tarzan's leopard skin, adding tights, boots and very uncomfortable-looking fur mittens.

In his first adventure Cat-Man is stabbed and killed by the head gangster. But that doesn't keep him down for long. "His guardian angel in the form of the tigress that mothered him gives him the 2nd of his 9 lives!" On his second outing, this one drawn by Hasen, he gets killed again. This time by a foreign spy who flies over in an airplane and gives him a shot of a deadly "blood-freezing ray". He comes back to life again, although the copy fudges by referring to this as the second of his nine lives. Naming a magazine *Crash* seems to indicate less than op-



timism and, sure enough, just as do airplanes and stock markets, *Crash* crashed with the fifth issue.

Cat-Man, however, had that old tigress on his side and came back to life in the spring of 1941 in *Cat-Man Comics*. This magazine he shared with such negligible characters as Hurricane Harrigan, the Deacon, the Rag Man and, later on, the Hood. Charles M. Quinlan was now the artist and he designed a new costume. Cowl and cape, orange tunic with a block C and cat head emblazoned on it, shorts and boots. His earliest escapade in his own book pits him against mad scientists who are using a destructive ray to destroy bridges and dams. They use their ray on Cat-Man, too, killing him graveyard dead. But the spirit of the tigress shows up to grant him "another of his nine lives". The copy is now less than explicit as to how many he's used up.



Before too many more months have gone by the Cat-Man's life grows more complicated. He enlists and, like the original Captain America, has to carry on his superhero career while serving in the army. And he is living, when off the base, with a twelve-year-old girl. The fact that she sometimes dresses up in a cat costume and aids him under the name Kitten doesn't much detract from the oddness of the situation. Kitten, real name Katie, arrives on the scene in #5 (December, 1941). She is blonde and childsized, and endowed by Quinlan with breasts that any teenage girl would be proud of.

The later adventures of Cat-Man and Kitten are somewhat more gruesome than the early ones. Bob Fujitani, at that time an expert on drawing slavering fiends and demented killers (on such features as the Hangman and the Zebra), took over the art chores in 1944. His Kitten, by the way, is a full-grown young woman. In a typical story from this period the feline team encounters two mad spinsters, a gang of trained killer gorillas and their recurrent nemesis, the tophatted and monocled Dr. Macabre, in an old dark mansion. After some gunplay, a stabbing and the repeated tying up of Cat-Man and Kitten, the nasty old maids, the sinister doctor and the most meanminded of the gorillas all plunge to their deaths off the roof of the spooky house.

Although the magazine was supposedly a bi-monthly, there were gaps of several months between the last few issues. The final one was #32, dated August, 1946. Possibly Cat-Man had by then used up all his nine lives, since he hasn't been seen from that day to this.

GOLDEN AGE PORTFOLIO

BILL EVERETT: BOODY ROGERS: WILL EISNER

Sub-Zero, who could put a chill on any gathering, was a typical 1940s second banana hero. Once, though, he was drawn by a first-rate artist. That was in Vol. 1, No. 5 (October 1940) of *Blue Bolt*, when Bill Everett handled the art chores. You'll notice that Everett, best remembered for his Sub-Mariner, managed to get quite a bit of water into this story too.

Sparky Watts, billed as the "World's Strongest Funny Man", began life as the less than serious superhero of a newspaper strip. After World War II his creator, Boody Rogers, began doing original stories about him for *Big Shot Comics*. The episode we're reprinting here, from #77 (May, 1947), is the first of those.

Yarko the Great, known far and wide as a Master Magician, was cooked up by Will Eisner in the days before Denny Colt ever thought about coming back from the dead. He first cast his spell in an overseas tabloid magazine called *Wags* and later made his American debut in Fox's *Wonderworld Comics*. Eisner has said that some of his earliest inventive and eccentric layouts were the result of trying to rescale tabloid art to fit standard comic book pages. Our mystic yarn is from *Wonderworld* #7 (November, 1939).

Rounding out our portfolio this issue are some samples of the dozens of comics style ads that were to be found in 1940s magazines. *Captain Tootsie*, which used a parody of the original Captain Marvel to sell Tootsie Rolls, was drawn for most of its life by none other than the Big Red Cheese's co-creator, C.C. Beck. Volto, who got more out of a bowl of Grape-Nuts Flakes than your average kid consumer, arrived from Mars in 1944. The artwork on his early adventures was by Frank Robbins. *Adventures of "R.C." and Quickie*, handsomely illustrated by Creig Flessel, gave you action plus lots of hard sell for Royal Crown, "the only cola that's best by taste test." Ray Thompson was a newspaper cartoonist and writer. He did a panel about a ghost in the 1940s and had scripted the *Myra North* adventure strip in the 1930s. Untold thousands of bubble gum addicts encountered his work wrapped around chunks of Fleer's. Similar strips also ran in comic books and we reproduce two sample half pages.

SUB-ZERO
OW-W!
AT THE HEIGHT OF A TERRIFIC STORM, THE SUB-ZERO MAN SEES··
AS SUB-ZERO WHIRLS
AS SUB-ZERO HEADS FOR THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER, THE LATTER HURLS A BOMB!
HOLD ON THERE!
HEY!
BUT A STREAK OF ICE EXPLODES IT HARMLESSLY IN MID-AIR.
BOOM!
GONE!
FOR HIM IT'S RAIN-ING LIKE THIS!
THE ELEMENTS HAVE FORMED A CURTAIN AROUND THE FLEEING FUGITIVE.
A LIGHTNING BOLT MUST
BOX JUST AS HOGAN
OPENED IT. IT'S HAP-
YOU'RE WRONG!
HOGAN WAS KILLED BY MAN-MADE

SOMEONE RAN A WIRE FROM THOSE HIGH-POWERED TROLLEY CARS AND TO THE CALL BOX. I SAW HIM, BUT HE GOT AWAY!
THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, THE SUB-ZERO MAN IS SUMMONED TO THE HOME OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY JOHNSON...
I WANT YOU TO HELP ME FIND THE SLAYER OF PATROLMAN HOGAN. IF ANYONE CAN DO IT IT'S YOU!
ANY IDEA WHO IT MIGHT BE?
I HAVEN'T ANY PROOF YET, BUT I'LL STAKE MY REPUTATION ON ITS BEING "PROFESSOR X" - ONE OF THE MOST DIABOLICAL CRIMINALS I'VE EVER KNOWN. I FIRST RAN ACROSS HIM
"BACK IN THE BOOTLEGGING ERA, HE WAS EMPLOYED TO MANUFACTURE INGENIOUS WEAPONS OF DEATH FOR GANGSTERS."
BULKY LITTLE MACHINE, BUT, AH - SO SENSITIVE!
"HE ALWAYS WORE SMALL STICKS OF DYNAMITE WIRED TO BATTERIES, AND BOASTED THAT IF CAPTURED, HE WOULD BLOW HIMSELF AND HIS CAPTORS TO PIECES!"
"BUT ONE DAY HOGAN KNOCKED THE PROFESSOR INTO THE RIVER. THE WATER RENDERED THE DYNAMITE USELESS, AND HOGAN HAULED HIM TO SHORE."
TAKE THAT, SMART GUY!
"I HAD THE PLEASURE OF PROSECUTING THE CASE."
I HEREBY SENTENCE YOU TO TWENTY YEARS PENAL SERVITUDE IN STATE'S PRISON!
WHAT!?!
"PROFESSOR X SWORE HE'D GET REVENGE. HE SAID NO JAIL COULD EVER HOLD HIM. LAST WEEK..."
HA! THE FOOLS!
- HE MADE GOOD HIS BOAST"
I GOT IN JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO AND FOUND A MESSAGE. IT WAS SIGNED, "PROFESSOR X," AND SAID, "I GOT HOGAN - YOU'RE NEXT!"

SUDDENLY, AS JOHNSON FINISHES HIS STORY-
LOOK! AT THE WINDOW! THAT MUST BE THE PROFESSOR!
SUB-ZERO THROWS A BLAST OF COLD AT THE WINDOW.
YOU GOT 'IM!
BUT JOHNSON IS SADLY MISTAKEN.
IT DIDN'T FREEZE HIM!!
RECOVERING FROM HIS SURPRISE, SUB-ZERO FREEZES THE WHOLE FIRE ESCAPE, BUT THE STRANGELY-CLAD PROFESSOR ESCAPES.
SUB-ZERO CONTINUES THE MAD CHASE THROUGH THE STREETS, WHEN SUDDENLY-
HA! I HEARD ABOUT YOU, SUB-ZERO, AND WAS PREPARED!
THE PROFESSOR STOPS AND WHEELS ABOUT, HURLING TWO LITTLE GAS BOMBS.
THIS'LL FIX YOU, MISTER!
HEY!
THE CAPSULES BURST, AND SUB-ZERO IS SURROUNDED BY CHOKING GAS FUMES!
LOSING SIGHT OF THE PROFESSOR, HE RACES BACK TO JOHNSON'S APARTMENT.
CHLORINE ENOUGH TO WIPE OUT A WHOLE REGIMENT!
SLIPPERY AS AN EEL, THAT FELLOW!
THANK HEAVEN YOU'RE SAFE! IF YOU HADN'T BEEN HERE, I'D HAVE- JUST A MOMENT- THERE'S THE PHONE.
BR-R-R-RING!

WONDER WHO'S CALLING AT THIS HOUR OF THE NIGHT?
WHAT'S THAT?
THE KEEN EYES OF THE SUB-ZERO MAN NOTICE THAT THE PHONE HAS BEEN TAMPERED WITH.
SUB-ZERO FREEZES JOHNSON'S HAND.
HOLD ON, JOHNSON!
YEOW!
THEN HE TURNS HIS STRANGE POWER ON THE PHONE ITSELF. BUT-
BOOM!
THE TERRIFIC EXPLOSION HURLS THE TWO MEN BACK TO THE WALL!
AS THE SMOKE CLEARS, SUB-ZERO GROPES THROUGH THE WRECKAGE FOR THE REMNANTS OF THE PHONE RECEIVER
HMMM! THE BASE OF THIS RECEIVER CONCEALED A SMALL BUT POWERFUL AMOUNT OF HIGH EXPLOSIVE!
THEN THAT EXPLAINS THE PROFESSOR'S VISIT AND THE TELEPHONE CALL!
RIGHT!

NEXT DAY, AS SUB-ZERO ENTERS HIS HOTEL --
MESSAGE FOR YOU, S.R.!
OH, THANKS
HOTEL DESMOND
MEMO
Mr. Johnson phoned - wants you to meet him at 529 Drake Street at once
NOW THAT'S STRANGE! WHAT WOULD JOHNSON BE DOING ON DRAKE STREET? HMMM! MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH PROFESSOR X
NICE PLACE FOR A MURDER I WONDER WHERE JOHNSON IS?
MAYBE HE'S INSIDE
VACANT
529
DOOR WAS OPEN. BUT - WHAT WAS THAT? SOUNDED LIKE A FOOTSTEP!
SUDDENLY A LAMP OVERHEAD BLAZES.
I SEE YOU GOT MY MESSAGE!

THE SUB-ZERO MAN TRIES TO FREEZE THE PROFESSOR'S GUN, BUT--
DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME! THIS GUN'S MADE OF COLD-RESISTANT ALLOY! AND SO IS THE MESH SUIT I'M WEARING!
LET'S SEE IF YOU CAN RESIST THIS!
OW!
YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!
UNLIKE ORDINARY BULLETS WHEN THEY RUMBLE TO BITS WHEN FIRED AT SUB-ZERO, THE WHITE-HOT SLUG SPEEDS UNERRINGLY TOWARD ITS TARGET!
HIS SCALP CREASED, SUB-ZERO FALLS UNCONSCIOUS!
THROUGH A SUBTERRANEAN PASSAGE, THE MAD CHEMICO CARRIES SUB-ZERO TO HIS SECRET LAIR.
I'M JUST AS GLAD THAT BULLET DIDN'T KILL HIM! I'VE GOT A BETTER WAY!

REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS, SUB-ZERO FINDS HIMSELF BOUND WITH COLD RESISTANT THONGS.
NOW, MY FRIEND, YOU'RE IN FOR A HOT TIME! HERE'S A LITTLE PREVIEW!
YOU WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS!
NO? HA-HA-HA-HA! HOW DOES THIS STRIKE YOU?
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF THIS!
THE FIRST SHOCK WILL BE QUITE MILD. I HATE TO HURRY THINGS!
THAT PHONE- SAY I'VE GOT AN
SUB-ZERO'S EYES ANXIOUSLY STARE AT THE TELEPHONE
AND SLOWLY, NOISELESSLY, THE RECEIVER RISES...
NUMBER, PLEASE!

AS PROFESSOR X PREPARES TO SHAVE SUB-ZERO'S HEAD FOR THE ELECTRODE CAP.
SO YOU'RE GOING TO MURDER ME, EH?
!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, AND STOP SHOUTING! THE WALLS ARE SOUNDPROOF!
THAT WAS CLEVER OF YOU- LEAVING A MESSAGE SIGNED WITH THE D.A.'S NAME, AND TELLING ME TO COME HERE TO 529 DRAKE STREET, WASN'T IT PROFESSOR?
TOO BAD YOU WON'T LIVE TO SEE HOW CLEVER I REALLY AM!
SUB-ZERO CLOSES HIS EYES, RELEASING HIS GAZE UPON THE PHONE, FEARING THE PROFESSOR MIGHT SUSPECT.
AS THE ICE MELTS THE DEVICE DROPS INTO PLACE IN ITS SOCKET, ESTABLISHING THE CONNECTION.
CLICK!
LATER—
NO HELP YET! I WONDER IF THAT MESSAGE GOT THROUGH?
JUST ABOUT READY, SUB-ZERO, MY FRIEND!

MMMM! I THINK I'VE GOT ONE MORE CHANCE!
AS PROFESSOR X REACHES FOR THE SWITCH SUB ZERO FREEZES THE PIPE AND A TERRIFIC WIPE
THEN SUB-ZERO THAWS IT, AND A TORRENT OF WATER CASCADES DOWN ON THE ASTONISHED PROFESSOR.
ANOTHER SUB ZERO STARE AND-
THE PROFESSOR IS FROZEN SOLID IN A HUGE BLOCK OF ICE!
SUB-ZERO FREEZES THE PIPE AGAIN SEALING THE CRACK WITH ICE
KEEP COOL, PROFESSOR,

A SHORT WHILE LATER –
SUB-ZERO!
IT'S ABOUT TIME! A FEW MORE MINUTES AND YOUR BOY FRIEND WOULD HAVE FROZEN TO DEATH!
WE RECEIVED YOUR MESSAGE FROM THE PHONE COMPANY, AND GOT HERE AS FAST AS WE COULD!
NOW THAT WE'VE GOT HIM, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH HIM? THAT TNT OF HIS MAY STILL GO OFF!
BRING HIM ALONG – I'LL SHOW WHAT WE'LL DO WITH HIM!
THE PROFESSOR IS CARRIED OUT –
– AND DROPPED INTO A BATHTUB!
TURN ON THE SHOWER, JOHNSON, AND MAKE IT HOT!
TEN MINUTES LATER –
DON'T WORRY, PROFESSOR, YOU'LL SOON BE IN A NICE WARM JAIL CELL!
YEOW!!
Another Exciting SUB-ZERO STORY IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF... BLUE BOLT!
10

ADVERTISEMENT

ADVENTURES of "R.C." and QUICKIE

DEADLINE FOR ACTION!
QUICKIE WE'RE SKUNKED
YEAH, LET'S GO CATCH A BOTTLE OF ROYAL CROWN COLA!
THE ROAD WHERE
HE?
HELP! WE'RE HEADED FOR THE FALLS
LOOK, TWIGS SHOOT PAST HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE FALLS! THE ONE IN THE STERN'S LOST HER
HELP!
HELP!
HURRY, QUICKIE! GET DOWN NEAR THE FALLS BUT FAST
I'VE GOT TO REACH THEM WITH THIS LINE AND IT'S GOT TO HOLD! HERE GOES!
MISS! DON'T LET GO!
GO IT! I'LL BREAK
WOW! THIS LINE WO
THE TROUT LINE SWINGS THE CANOE OUT OF THE FURIOUS CURRENT...BUT THE STRAIN IS TOO MUCH
YOU'RE WONDERFUL
WELL... AND YOU CAN STEP ASHORE
I NEED A QUICK-UP BEFORE I'LL KNUCKLE DOWN
ROYAL CROWN COLA!
ONE HOUR LATER...
GILBERT ROLAND SAYS:
YOU BET YOUR BOOTS R C TASTES BEST!
See Gilbert Roland as the Cisco Kid on Monogram's "KING OF THE BANDITS"
COLA
2 FULL GLASSES

SPARKY WATTS
LISTEN!
THE LARGEST CYCLONE EVER SEEN IN AMERICA IS ON A RAMPAGE OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ACROSS KANSAS--- ALREADY SIX TOWNS HAVE---
43
SPARKY, THAT'S SOMETHING SCIENCE WILL NEVER LEARN TO CONTROL--THE ELEMENTS ARE TOO POWERFUL!
I READ WHERE A GUY INVENTED A ROCKET THAT WOULD BLAST A CYCLONE AND BREAK IT UP!
YOU'VE BEEN READING TOO MANY COMIC BOOKS, SLAP HAPPY!
IT SOUNDS POSSIBLE, DOC--IF THE FUNNEL OF A CYCLONE WAS SPLIT UP IT MIGHT LOSE ITS SUCTION!
YES, BUT NOTHING IS STRONG ENOUGH TO--
HOW DO WE KNOW? SINCE YOU CHARGED ME WITH COSMIC RAYS I'VE NEVER YET FOUND ANYTHING STRONGER THAN I AM---
---SO BY REPEATEDLY DIVING THROUGH THE FUNNEL I MAY BE ABLE TO CHANGE THE AIR CURRENTS!
HMM! COULD BE! YOU'RE AS STRONG AS A BULLDOZER AND YOU CAN FLY BY JUST WAVING YOUR ARMS--- --WHY NOT TRY IT!!

OPEN THE WINDOW, SLAP HAPPY-- --I'M OFF TO KANSAS!
ROGER! RUNWAY IS CLEAR, SIR!
I'LL GET LOTS OF ALTITUDE SO WHEN I REACH TH' CYCLONE I CAN GO INTO A LONG POWER-DIVE AND GET PLENTY OF SPEED---
--AND I IMAGINE I'LL NEED ALL I CAN MUSTER TO MEET A CYCLONE, HEAD-ON.
MY BREATH IS FREEZING INTO ICE CUBES--- --GUESS I'M HIGH ENOUGH!
THERE'S COLUMBUS, OHIO BELOW ME-- AND INDIANAPOLIS AND ST. LOUIS ON AHEAD--- ER--- I MEAN BEHIND ME-- --I MUST BE GOING PRETTY FAST!
THERE'S TH' CYCLONE-- --AND IT'S HEADING STRAIGHT FOR TOPEKA!!
WELL--- HERE GOES NOTHIN'!
2

I SPLIT TH' FUNNEL-- BUT TH' TREMENDOUS SUCTION OF THE MAIN CYCLONIC BODY ABOVE PULLED IT TOGETHER AGAIN!
OOOF!
SO THERE'S ONLY ONE THING TO DO-- --ATTACK TH' MAIN BODY--
OOH-- I'VE BEEN SUCKED INTO THE VACUUM --I-- I CAN'T BREATHE-- ---GASP!!
IT-- IT'S TOO STRONG! I--I'M OUTTA CONTROL!
3

SPARKY BLACKS OUT--AND UNCONSCIOUSLY SPINS ALONG SUSPENDED IN SPACE--- ACROSS SOUTHERN KANSAS, OVER OKLAHOMA, OVER TEXAS--ON--ON--
THEN, AS SUDDENLY AS A VIOLIN STRING SNAPS, THE CYCLONE'S GIGANTIC FORCE SPENDS ITSELF AND DEPOSITS SPARKY IN A STRANGE SPOT---
AS HE SLOWLY REVIVES, A CURIOUS GROUP GATHERS AROUND HIM--
WHAT IS IT?
IT LOOKETH LIKE A MAN!
WHAT MANNER OF GARMENT IS THAT HE WEARS?
FORSOOTH! I DO NOT KNOW!
GREETINGS, MAN--FROM WHITHER DOES THOU HAILETH?
FROM WHITHER DOES THOU--?? OH, YOU MEAN FROM WHERE DO I COME! I'M FROM APPLE-DALE, NEW YORK!
APPLEDALE NEW YORK!? FORSOOTH! HE TALKETH IN RIDDLES--WHITHER IS THAT STRANGE PLACE?
ARE YOU KIDDING? IT'S NEW YORK STATE--WHAT STATE IS THIS?
STATE? WHAT MEANETH THOU BY STATE?

YOU MEAN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT A STATE IS-- --- WHAT COUNTRY IS THIS ?
THIS IS "NEW ARTHUR"--NAMED IN HONOR OF OUR GREAT KING--KING ARTHUR!
B-BUT KING ARTHUR HAS BEEN DEAD FOR CENTURIES!
NATCH! BUT HE WAS OUR RULER WHEN OUR FOREFATHERS LEFT BRITTANY TO SEEKETH A NEW LAND!
OKAY-- WHERE AKE WE NOW-- WHAT LAND IS THIS ?
WE KNOWETH NOT-- OUR FOREFATHERS' GOOD SHIP WAS SEIZED BY A GREAT WHIRL STORM--THE SHIP WAS CARRIED THROUGH THE SKY AND CAMETH TO REST IN THIS VALLEY!
OUR VALLEY IS SURROUNDED BY CLIFFS--THERE IS NO WAY OUT AND THOU ART THE FIRST OUTSIDER TO EVER COMETH TO THIS WOMANS' COUNTRY!
D-DO YOU MEAN THERE ARE ONLY WOMEN HERE !?
OH, NO. THERE ARE MEN!
THEN PLEASE TAKE ME TO THE RULER!
WE WOMEN RULE! WE HUNT THE WILD GAME--WORK OUR FIELDS--BUILD OUR---
DON'T THE MEN WORK ?
5

THEY COOKETH, CLEANETH HOUSE, WASHETH THE DISHES AND CARETH FOR THE CHILDREN-- WHAT ELSE SHOULD THEY DO?
WHERE I CAME FROM THE MEN NORMALLY MAKE THE LIVING AND THE WOMEN KEEP HOUSE!
DO THOU MEANETH THAT OUR MEN ARE WRONG?
I WOULDN'T GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT-- --BUT THEY MUST BE A LAZY BUNCH!
THAT'S AN INSULT TO OUR MEN'S HONOR! FOR THAT THOU MUST FIGHT OUR STRONGEST!!
BRING TH' LAZY BUM ON--MAYBE I CAN KNOCK SOME PRIDE INTO HIM!
HIM!? DON'T BE RIDICK! WOMEN DO ALL THE FIGHTING HERE-- --SO--
--THOU MUST FIGHT TWO-TON GERTIE!
W-WHAT?!
UP WITH THOU GUARD! OUR MEN'S GOOD NAME SHALL BE AVENGED!!
NOTICE!! BE SURE TO WEAR YOUR OLD CLOTHES WHEN YOU READ THE NEXT ISSUE OF BIG SHOT COMICS --- BECAUSE THE BLOOD IS GOING TO SPLATTER..
6

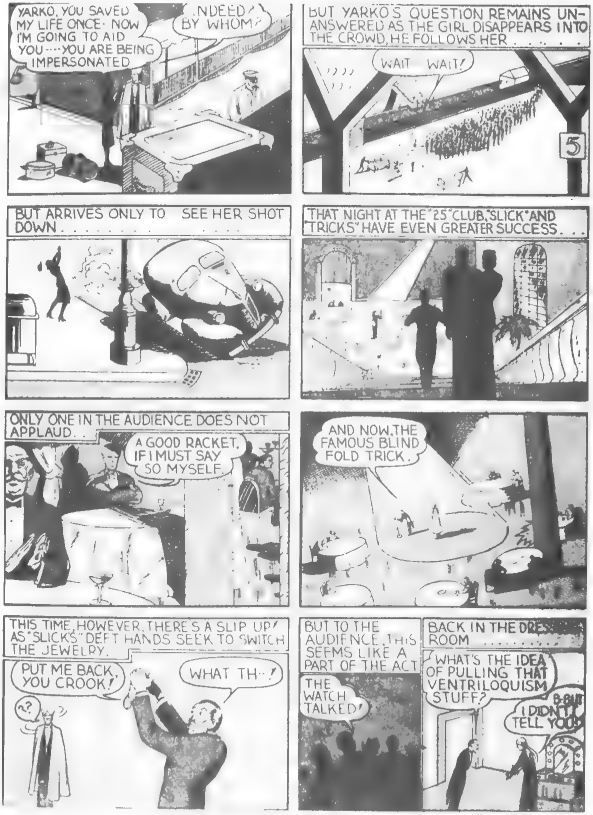
Captain Tootsie
TRAPS
THE CIRCUS CULPRIT
BY C.C. BECK
CAPTAIN TOOTSIE, SOMEONE'S BEEN MONKEYING WITH OUR EQUIPMENT! OUR STAR TRAPEZE PERFORMER HAS HAD THREE ACCIDENTS THIS WEEK! THE NEXT TIME MAY BE FATAL!
THE SECRET LEGION AND I WILL TRY TO TRAP THE CULPRIT, MR BINGLING!
HURRY NOW, KIDS! WE'VE GOT TO SPRINKLE THIS DETECTING POWDER ON ALL THE...
SET UP THE DETECTOR AND WATCH FOR SOMEONE WITH...
CERTAIN SUBSTANCES FLUORESCE OR GLOW IN THE DARK WHEN INVISIBLE RAYS FROM AN ULTRAVIOLET LAMP STRIKE THEM. CAPTAIN TOOTSIE AND THE SECRET LEGION HOPE TO TRAP THE VILLAIN BY THE TRACES OF DETECTING POWDER HIS HANDS WILL PICK UP.
ULTRAVIOLET LAMP WITH SPECIAL FILTER
DR. FRANKLIN BOOM
DETECTING POWDER
NOW LET'S EAT A TOOTSIE POP WITH A TOOTSIE ROLL CENTER. THEY'LL GIVE US THE QUICK ENERGY WE NEED TO TRAP THE CULPRIT!
MMMM! TOOTS! THESE TOOTSIE POPS ARE SWELL - JUST LIKE TOOTSIE ROLLS!
PRESENTING MISS TRIXIE, MOST FAMOUS TRAPEZE ARTIST IN THE WORLD, IN HER DEATH DEFYING AERIAL ACT!
CAPT. TOOTSIE!
YAAAY
SUDDENLY
WHUT?
OOH! THERE'S FALLING DUST IN THE AIR!
HEH HEH
OOOH, YOU SAVED MY LIFE!
THAT SURE WAS A CLOSE ONE, MISS TRIXIE! WE'LL TRAP THE CULPRIT FOR YOU!
WOW!
NOW COME ON, EVERYBODY! WE'LL GET MR. BINGLING TO SHINE ALL EMPLOYEES TO BE EXAMINED UNDER THE ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT!
A HALF-HOUR LATER CAPTAIN TOOTSIE IS BAFFLED
SKREEK! SKREEK!
CHEE, ZULU! NO LUCK, CAPT TOOTSIE! NO TELL-TALE POWDER ON ANYONE'S HANDS!
THERE'S THE CULPRIT!
GRAB HIM BEFORE HE CAN ESCAPE!
LOOK AT THE SIZE OF HIS HANDS!
AHA!
WHAT?! ZULU IS THE GUILTY ONE WE CAN'T HIM!
ZULU MUST HAVE BEEN CHEWING ON THE ROPES! WE NEVER WOULD HAVE SUSPECTED HIM!
POOR LITTLE ZULU! FORGIVE HIM!
GOSH! AFTER ALL THAT EXCITEMENT I GUESS WE OUGHT TO HAVE A ROUND OF TOOTSIE POPS WITH TOOTSIE ROLL CENTERS
AND YOU GET SOME GRAND SURPRISE AND PLENTY OF PEP WHEN YOU EAT A TEMPTIN' TOOTSIE POP! THEY'RE A DOUBLE TREAT! FOR YOU START WITH LICKIN' GOOD HARD CANDY - CHERRY OR ORANGE OR LIME OR OTHER SWELL FLAVORS - THEN YOU REACH THAT DEE-LICIOUS, DEE-LIGHTFUL TOOTSIE ROLL CENTER. OH BOY, GET SOME TODAY!
ALSO GET CHEWY CHOCOLATY TOOTSIE ROLLS. THEY GIVE QUICK ENERGY, TOO!
DE-LICIOUS CHEWY CHOCOLATY TOOTSIE ROLL CENTER

VOLTO
GEE, PROFESSOR, WHAT IS IT?
LOOKS LIKE A BIG SOAP BUBBLE! AND IT'S GOING TO LAND RIGHT HERE!
I'M VOLTO FROM MARS, AND I'M HUNGRY! DO YOU HAVE CEREAL GRAINS HERE ON EARTH?
LOOK! THE BUBBLE EXPLODED!
YOU SEE, ON MA[illegible] NOT ONLY NOURISH[illegible] RE[illegible] HARVEST[illegible] WA[illegible]
JUST TRY THIS CEREAL! EVERYONE DOWN HERE GOES FOR IT!
SAY, THIS IS THE BEST I EVER TASTED! WHAT DO YOU CALL IT?
IT'S CALLED GRAPE-NUTS
THAT DID IT! MY MAGNETISM IS COMPLETELY RECHARGED!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY MAGNETISM?
PERHAPS I CAN SHOW YOU! IS THAT A DANGEROUS ANIMAL?
YES! RUN! IT'S A MOUNTAIN LION!
OH NO! WHEN I SAY 'VOLTO', MY MAGNETIC LEFT HAND REPELS!
AND MY MAGNETIC RIGHT HAND ATTRACTS! DO YOU UNDERSTAND NOW?
VOLTO
AMAZING!
IT WON'T MAKE YOU MAGNETIC, BUT YOU'LL AGREE WITH VOLTO – GRAPE-NUTS FLAKES IS THE SWELLEST CEREAL YOU EVER TASTED! GET A PACKAGE TODAY!

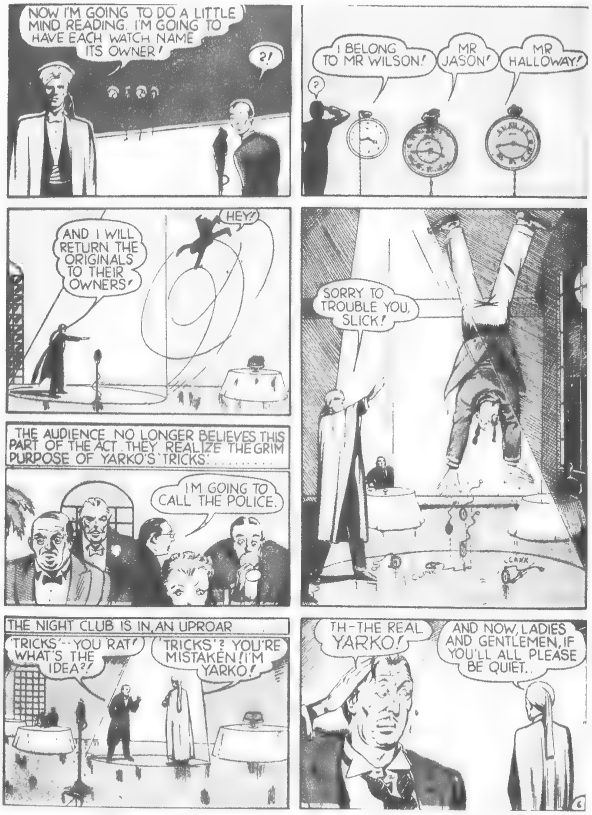
YARKO
THE GREAT
MASTER OF MAGIC
By Anthony Brooks
IN A CHEAP DOWNTOWN ACTORS HOTEL
CENTRAL HOTEL
ROOMS
I AIN'T EATEN A GOOD MEAL IN WEEKS.
VAUDEVILLE'S OUT... WE'RE JUST A COUPLE OF HAS-BEEN MAGICIANS.
UNLESS WE CAN DOPE OUT A NEW GIMMICK.
Y--YOU MEAN A RACKET? I AIN'T GONNA DO NOTHIN' PHONEY.
TAKE IT EASY NOW, THIS ANGLE IS A CINCH.... LISTEN...
I'VE BEEN READIN' ABOUT A MAGICIAN CALLED YARKO..... TRAVELS AROUND THE WORLD ...HE'S GOT QUITE A REPUTATION RIGHT NOW. HE'S SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE. EVERY BODY KNOWS HIM-
NOW HERE'S THE GAG--YOU WILL BE YARKO!

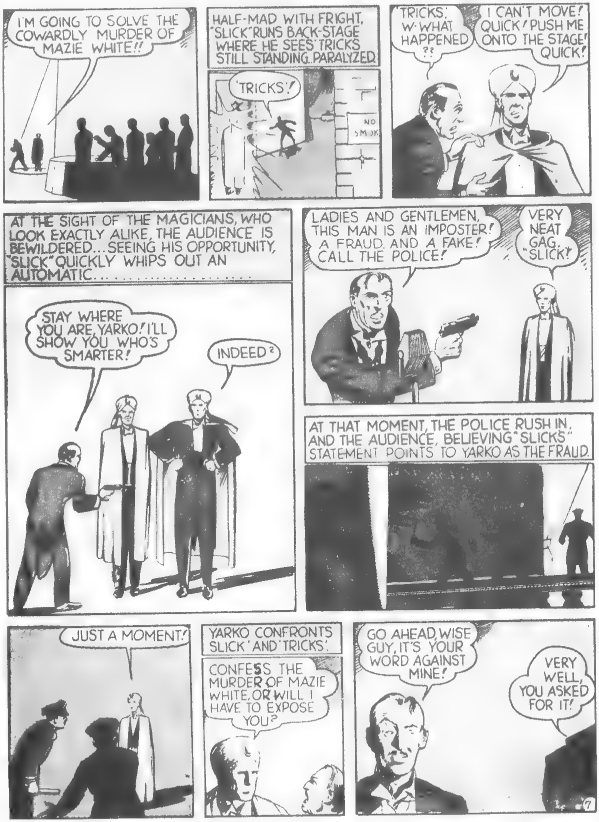
BUT "SLICK" I DON'T UNDERSTAND
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH YOU "TRICKS" YOU GOT NO IMAGINATION YOU CAN POSE AS YARKO.. WE'LL DO A MAGICIAN ACT---MAKE SOME QUICK DOUGH---AND BEAT IT..
IN A LITTLE WHILE, A DEFT APPLICATION OF MAKEUP CHANGES "TRICKS" TODDS ENTIRE APPEARANCE
HOW DO I LOOK, "SLICK"?
PERFECT . NOW TO BUILD YOU UP..
THE NEXT DAY, A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IS BEGUN..
YARKO ARRIVES
MAGICIAN HERE FOR PERSONAL APPEARANCE & A TOUR
WORLD'S GREATEST MAGICIAN
TONIGHT
PREVIEW TODAY
YARKO THE GREAT
YARKO HERE
TONIGHT!
AND THAT NIGHT AT THE SWANK 25 CLUB, "SLICK" AND "TRICKS" GO THROUGH THEIR WELL PREPARED ACT
AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YARKO WILL PERFORM HIS FAMOUS MIND READING TRICK
I WILL PASS AMONG THE AUDIENCE AND BORROW A TRINKET---THANK YOU, SIR--- NOW, THOUGH BLIND FOLDED, YARKO WILL TELL US WHAT IT IS I HOLD..
ABRA-CADABRA YOU HOLD A WATCH AND CHAIN.
THE AUDIENCE APPLAUDS LOUDLY.... HOWEVER, THEY DO NOT SEE SLICK SWITCH THE EXPENSIVE WATCH FOR A CHEAP IMITATION.
THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL
HERE IS YOUR WATCH, SIR.. THANK YOU

BACK STAGE IN THEIR DRESSING ROOM, THE TWO GLOAT OVER THEIR SUCCESS
IT WORKS, HA HA HA! 500 BUCKS A WEEK AND A LITTLE SHOPLIFTIN' ON THE SIDE!
THIS WATCH OUGHTA BRING 300 BUCKS!
STILL UP TO YOUR OLD TRICKS, EH BOYS!
MAZIE?
HUH?
W-WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' IN TOWN?
I CAME TO JOIN THE ACT, BOYS!
NO YOU DON'T, MAZIE GET OUT!
O.K., PAL-IF THAT'S HOW YOU FEEL, BUT REMEMBER, I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOW
YA-LIKE BOTH A COUPLE OF ROCKS!
OH-BLACKMAIL, HUH? TAKE THIS!
NOW, BEAT IT!
AND
AN ALLEY
SLOWLY SHE RISES TO HER FEET
I'LL GET EVEN WITH YOU FOR THIS!
AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER, WHEN THE LINER LAURETANIA DOCKS . . .
3

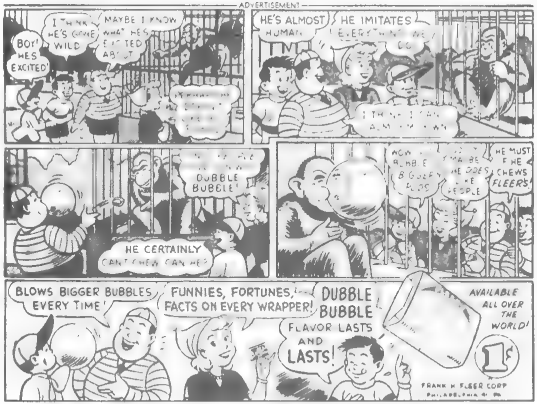

YARKO, YOU SAVED MY LIFE ONCE· NOW I'M GOING TO AID YOU····YOU ARE BEING IMPERSONATED
INDEED! BY WHOM?
BUT YARKO'S QUESTION REMAINS UNANSWERED AS THE GIRL DISAPPEARS INTO THE CROWD. HE FOLLOWS HER . . . . .
WAIT WAIT!
5
BUT ARRIVES ONLY TO SEE HER SHOT DOWN . . . . . .
THAT NIGHT AT THE "25" CLUB, "SLICK" AND "TRICKS" HAVE EVEN GREATER SUCCESS . . .
ONLY ONE IN THE AUDIENCE DOES NOT APPLAUD . .
A GOOD RACKET, IF I MUST SAY SO MYSELF
AND NOW, THE FAMOUS BLIND FOLD TRICK .
THIS TIME, HOWEVER, THERE'S A SLIP UP! AS "SLICK'S" DEFT HANDS SEEK TO SWITCH THE JEWELRY.
PUT ME BACK, YOU CROOK!
WHAT TH··!
?
BUT TO THE AUDIENCE, THIS SEEMS LIKE A PART OF THE ACT
THE WATCH TALKED!
BACK IN THE DRESS ROOM . . . . . .
WHAT'S THE IDEA OF PULLING THAT VENTRILOQUISM STUFF?
B-BUT I DIDN'T TELL YOU!

GEE, SLICK I'M WORRIED ABOUT THAT JOB WE DID!
SH-H-MAZIE'S DEAD AND DEAD DAMES DON'T TALK! C'MON, WE'RE DUE ON STAGE!
AS THEY PASS, YARKO GESTURES.
NOBODY'LL EVER KNOW WE CROAKED HER!
LEAVING THE FALSE MAGICIAN PARALYZED, YARKO STEPS IN BESIDE THE OTHER..
THERE'S OUR CUE! WELL, WOW'M TONIGHT, EH, TRICKS?
YES, THEY'LL SEE A SHOW THEY'LL NEVER FORGET!
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FIRST, I WILL ATTEMPT TO SOLVE A SERIES OF PETTY CRIMES THAT HAVE BEEN COMMITTED RIGHT IN THIS NIGHT CLUB!
YARKO GESTURES.
PSST- YA SAP, THAT AIN'T IN THE ACT!
WATCHES AND VALUABLES THAT HAVE BEEN REPLACED WITH WORTHLESS TRINKETS FLY FROM THEIR OWNERS.
I SAY, THIS IS AMUSING! HA-HA!
GREAT STUFF, TRICKS! WHAT A HAUL!
THE WATCHES ARE SUSPENDED IN MID-AIR.


NOW I'M GOING TO DO A LITTLE MIND READING. I'M GOING TO HAVE EACH WATCH NAME ITS OWNER!
?!
I BELONG TO MR WILSON!
MR JASON!
MR HALLOWAY!
?
AND I WILL RETURN THE ORIGINALS TO THEIR OWNERS!
HEY!
SORRY TO TROUBLE YOU, SLICK!
THE AUDIENCE NO LONGER BELIEVES THIS PART OF THE ACT. THEY REALIZE THE GRIM PURPOSE OF YARKO'S TRICKS.
I'M GOING TO CALL THE POLICE.
THE NIGHT CLUB IS IN AN UPROAR
TRICKS -- YOU RAT! WHAT'S THE IDEA?!
TRICKS? YOU'RE MISTAKEN! I'M YARKO!
TH-THE REAL YARKO!
AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IF YOU'LL ALL PLEASE BE QUIET..


I'M GOING TO SOLVE THE COWARDLY MURDER OF MAZIE WHITE!!
HALF-MAD WITH FRIGHT, "SLICK" RUNS BACK-STAGE WHERE HE SEES TRICKS STILL STANDING, PARALYZED.
TRICKS!
NO SMOK
"TRICKS", W-WHAT HAPPENED??
I CAN'T MOVE! QUICK! PUSH ME ONTO THE STAGE! QUICK!
AT THE SIGHT OF THE MAGICIANS, WHO LOOK EXACTLY ALIKE, THE AUDIENCE IS BEWILDERED... SEEING HIS OPPORTUNITY, "SLICK" QUICKLY WHIPS OUT AN AUTOMATIC.....
STAY WHERE YOU ARE, YARKO! I'LL SHOW YOU WHO'S SMARTER!
INDEED?
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS MAN IS AN IMPOSTER! A FRAUD, AND A FAKE! CALL THE POLICE!
VERY NEAT GAG, SLICK!
AT THAT MOMENT, THE POLICE RUSH IN, AND THE AUDIENCE, BELIEVING "SLICKS" STATEMENT, POINTS TO YARKO AS THE FRAUD.
JUST A MOMENT!
YARKO CONFRONTS SLICK AND TRICKS.
CONFESS THE MURDER OF MAZIE WHITE, OR WILL I HAVE TO EXPOSE YOU?
GO AHEAD, WISE GUY, IT'S YOUR WORD AGAINST MINE!
VERY WELL, YOU ASKED FOR IT!
7

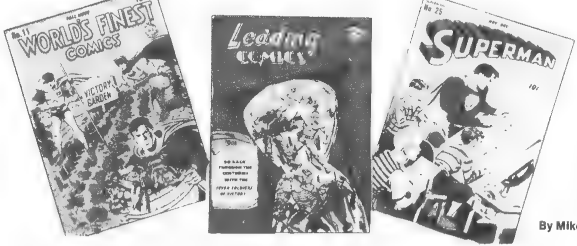
FIRST, I'LL PRODUCE THE BODY!
THESE MEN ARE REALLY SLICK SNEAD AND TRICKS TODD FRAUDS!
MASS HYPNOTISM, COPS! ASK HIM FOR PROOF!
AS IF COMPLYING WITH A REQUEST, THE GIRL REMOVES A BULLET FROM HER FOREHEAD..
OFFICER, SEIZE THAT MAN AND EXAMINE HIS GUN!
YOU'LL FIND THAT THE BULLET CAME FROM THE GUN HE'S HOLDING!
CAN'T TELL ABOUT THAT UNTIL I HAVE THE BALLISTIC EXPERT CHECK IT, BUT WE'LL HOLD SNEAD, ANYWAY!
AND WE'LL TAKE YOU IN TOO, MR. YAR... HEY! HE'S DISAPPEARING!!
C'MON, YOU TWO, YOU'RE COMING DOWN TO HEADQUARTERS!
BUT THAT GUY, YARKO, WHY DON'TCHA GET HIM?
CAN'T ARREST A GUY THAT AIN'T THERE, DOPE!
AND A THOROUGHLY BEWILDERED AUDIENCE LEAVES THE '25' CLUB, THAT NIGHT.....
SCREWIEST SHOW I EVER SAW!
IF YOU ASK ME, I THINK IT WAS A PUBLICITY STUNT!
MAYBE YES, AND MAYBE NO..
FOLLOW YARKO ON ANOTHER EXCITING ADVENTURE IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF WONDERWORLD COMICS


ADVERTISEMENT
Boy! HE'S EXCITED
I THINK HE'S GONE WILD
MAYBE I KNOW WHAT HE'S EXCITED ABOUT
HE'S ALMOST HUMAN
HE IMITATES EVERYTHING WE DO
DUBBLE BUBBLE!
HE CERTAINLY CAN'T CHEW GUM LIKE THAT
HE MUST BE A BIG USER OF FLEER'S
HE DOES CHEWS FLEER'S
BLOWS BIGGER BUBBLES EVERY TIME!
FUNNIES, FORTUNES, FACTS ON EVERY WRAPPER!
DUBBLE BUBBLE FLAVOR LASTS AND LASTS!
AVAILABLE ALL OVER THE WORLD!
1¢
FRANK H. FLEER CORP
PHILADELPHIA, PA.

ADVERTISEMENT
LET'S BUY SOME GUM AND READ OUR FORTUNES
I HOPE I GET A GOOD FORTUNE
I WANT TO TELL MY FORTUNE ABOUT MY HEART ACHE
WE WANT TO HEAR OUR FORTUNES
WHERE'S HIS CRYSTAL BALL?
WAS HE GOT A HEAD ACHE
HMMM
SWAMI BUJAHNY CRYSTAL BALL TELLS FORTUNES IN DUBBLE BUBBLE GUM
COINS SWAMI'S PALM WITH PENNY HEAD UP AND FINDS IN DUBBLE BUBBLE GUM A PACKET OF HIS OWN CRYSTAL BALL
GEE HERB'S MY FORTUNE I'M GOING TO BUY DUBBLE BUBBLE FROM NOW ON!
BLOWS BIGGER 'N' BETTER BUBBLES
IT'S FUN TO FOLLOW FLEER FUNNIES
TRADE AN' SWAP THEM TOO
1¢

COLLECTING COVERLESS COMICS

TRANSFORMING TRIPE INTO TREASURES



By Mike Barson

There it sits: an old issue of *Batman*. There's no cover, so you can't tell what number it is, or the date. You look at the price: three bucks. Is it worth it? You look at the rest of the comics on the dealer's table, which include several "fine" condition copies of *Batman*. The prices on the nice copies range from $30 to $150. You look again at the coverless copy, and decide, "What the heck" and buy it.

Congratulations. You've just entered the world of the Golden-age comic pack-rat. Here everything is low-rent; there is no talk of investments, of appreciation, of the spread between "fine" and "mint". This is the land of the unwanted comic book—the book without a cover, without a centerfold, with a coupon clipped, with doodling on the artwork, with the first wraparound page missing—this is the book that the Golden-age pack-rat does not pass up. He takes it not because he intends to make a profit with it (although such a thing is possible), but rather because he knows that, if he does not rescue it, chances are it will end up in the trashcan by and by. Like the archaeologist who becomes excited over the tiniest chip of pottery, the pack-rat never scorns a fragment of a Golden-age comic book, no matter how useless it might appear to the average collector. He knows that it is his duty to salvage the flotsam and jetsam of the Golden-age, to give it the home that no one else will.

Let's take a second look at that coverless *Batman* you picked up for a pittance. Of what use is it? First, we must try to identify exactly what it is we have. In the case of *Batman*, this is fairly easy, because a book exists—Michael Fleisher's *The Encyclopedia of Comic Book Heroes, Volume 1: Batman* (Collier, 1976), which identifies every issue of *Batman*, *Detective* and *World's Finest* comics from 1939 to 1965 by giving the title of each story featuring the Batman, along with a brief plot synopsis. But suppose one does not have this book as a reference, or has another Golden-age title which has not been catalogued so thoroughly. Is there anything that can be done to identify it?

Without using Fleisher's book, let's try to pinpoint that issue of *Batman*. It has four stories in it, but in this case the titles will not be of much use. So let's look at the *ads*, which most DC comics carried a page or two of. The back page of our book shows the following current DC releases: *Star Spangled #71*, *Action #41*, *More Fun #72*, *Adventure #67*, and *Flash #22*; all are dated "Oct." So we know that we have the October 1941 issue of *Batman* in our hands. A quick flip through Overstreet's Price Guide tells us that *Batman #1* was dated Spring 1940. But a little additional research tells us that *Batman* converted from a quarterly to a bi-monthly book early in its history. Thus our book proves to be the October-November issue, #7.

All right; now we know that we picked up a book that lists for $50 in "good", and over $200 in "mint", for $3. Other than that, what have we accomplished? First, we have a great book to read, one that we might not have been able to purchase if it had been in nice, "collector's" condition. But should we not want to keep it, this coverless book could help to restore someone else's incomplete copy. Most likely of use would be the centerfold,

which could complete the copy that has a cover but is missing a centerfold that has been sitting unhappily in Arkansas for the last ten or fifteen years. Or there might be a copy with the coupon for TOM MIX Ralston Giveaway #5 clipped out; that, too, we could provide. Or we could bide our time, and try to find a cover alone to put on our book, or a copy that has a cover but is otherwise incomplete, making it affordable.

It should be pointed out right now that one will never get rich waiting to find all the pieces that will turn a fragment into a complete, collectible book. For every cover you find that goes with a coverless book in your stack, there will be fifty or sixty that don't quite make it. I've always been frustrated by the coverless *All Star* #5 I have, not because it isn't a nice book to read—it is—but because I also have just the *covers* to #6. It almost makes me feel bad to see the two side-by-side; close but no cigar. The same for my coverless *Wonder Woman* #13, which resides inside the covers to #12. On the other hand, like most Golden-age pack-rats, I've had my share of little triumphs as well. Having the covers to *Daredevil* #5 didn't seem like much to me, until I bought a coverless copy for $8. The result was a $40 book. Even more satisfying was finding front covers—*just* the fronts—to put on my coverless copies of *Batman* #2 and *Detective* #43. No doubt their value was increased by doing this, but that wasn't my chief concern; I just was pleased to have the essential parts to two 1940 comics that I otherwise wouldn't have been able to buy.

But what happens when you find a book or covers to a title that you *don't* care to read or keep? If the price is right, grab it—even if you can't use it, someone else probably can, and that someone might be willing to trade you something you *do* need for helping him out. Although I don't collect *Marvel Mystery*, I didn't let the covers to #4 slip by when they were offered to me for $20. I knew that coverless books are more common than covers, and that someone out there probably needed these covers. The complete book lists for over $200 in "good", so I knew I'd recoup my cost, and then some. Sure enough, I advertised the covers and found a party who offered me three Golden-age books (one coverless, one missing a centerfold, and one just "fair") for my covers. Now he has a valuable book and I have three nice 1940 items.

When pack-rats like us trade, we try to establish a common rate for our books. The best way I've found is to treat everything as if it were in "good" —that price is the simplest yardstick. Thus, a coverless *All Star* #21 would have a *trade* value of about $38, slightly less than an *Action* #21, which goes for $45. That's close enough for most coverless pack-rat collectors; maybe a coverless *Super* #42 would round it off just right.

Keep in mind, though, that in actually buying and selling coverless comics, only a *fraction* of the "good" value is to be used. Several years ago, Overstreet suggested 50% as the going rate, but this was overly optimistic, since that is the value a *complete* copy in "fair" condition might command. Twenty percent would be more like it, although it really all depends on how much, or how little, a collector wants the item. I know that I would gladly go higher for *Batman*, *Police* and *Detective* comics, while I wouldn't want to pay even 20% for the titles I don't enjoy reading. Recently I paid 50% of the "good" price for a coverless *Amazing Mystery Funnies* from 1940, because it had a Basil Wolverton "Space Patrol" story that I wanted, and I didn't feel like waiting for a cheaper copy to come along. Who knows?—I might have waited for the rest of my life for it.

Which brings us to another factor to consider in collecting coverless comics from the Golden-age: there seems to be fewer of them around than there were ten years ago. I can suggest two reasons for this phenomenon. The first is supply. As few copies as there are of any Golden-age book still in existence, there are fewer still that are coverless (and fewer still as just covers). Over the years, these incomplete copies have found their way into garbage pails by collectors who only wanted nice, complete copies; by dealers who didn't feel like trying to identify what they had, then getting only a few dollars for their trouble; or by people who simply figured the things weren't *worth* keeping.

Of course, it is the very undesirability of these incomplete books that is both the joy and the bane of the pack-rat collector. If the price commanded were better, many more coverless books and covers would be out there in the marketplace. As it is, people say, "Why bother?". Only the big titles, such as *Superman*, *Batman*, *Captain America* and *Action* are offered with any regularity in dealers' catalogues—' The titles for which there are fewer collectors—and which might be much more difficult to identify—seem to show up less frequently. Come on, all you coverless copies of *Crash*, *U.S.A.*, *Keen Detective Funnies*, *Blue Ribbon* and *Green Mask*—we know you're out there!

Once in awhile the fortunate pack-rat will be offered an entire box of bits and pieces as a lot. If he's wise, he won't turn it down, not only for all of the above reasons, but because groups of incomplete books obtained from a single source often match up, once you've done a bit of detective work. I put together a copy of *Human Torch* #5 that way; the owner had just neglected to try matching the covers up with the books in the bunch. And even the most humble of fragments might find itself sought after one day in the future. That's why I hang onto two lonely pieces of paper. One is the centerfold to *Superman* #2, the other the wraparound to *Superman* #1.

Someday I hope to give them a home.

WOMEN IN COMICS

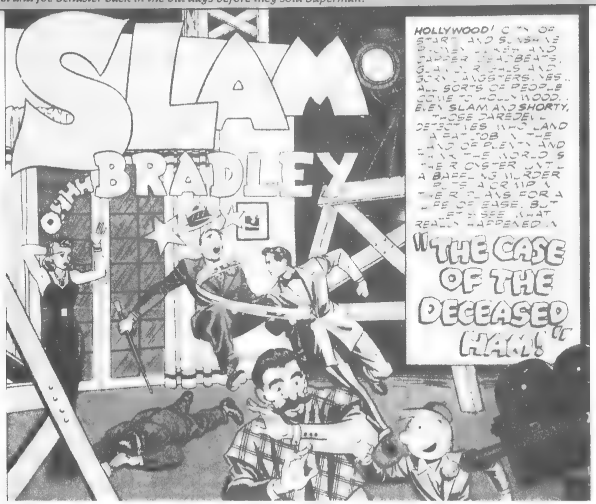
Senorita Rio, the "bewitching American secret agent," first burst into view in *Fight Comics* #19 (June, 1942). Fiction House, the fountainhead of what later became known as Good Girl Art, published *Fight* and each issue was chockfull of sexy ladies in various stages of undress. The senorita, "America's lovely daring spy ace," managed to hold her own against all competition. In her initial adventure she appeared in a skintight scarlet evening gown, a bathing suit and her underwear. Unhampered by all the costume changes, she thwarts a Nazi spy ring based in Brazil with ease in just eight pages. We learn in this plot episode that she is actually starlet Rita Farrar, "who soared to fame with the opening of her new picture, 'Lady Dance No More'," and that she faked her suicide in order to go underground in Rio de Janeiro and become an American spy. She's motivated by patriotism and the fact that her fiancé was killed at Pearl Harbor.

In subsequent adventures Senorita Rio tackled Nazi-paid guerillas who were sabotaging the Brazillian rubber crop, destroyed a secret Nazi airfield run by "a pot-bellied ex-Chicago racketeer" and took care of sundry other spies and scoundrels. She was an expert marksperson and also good in hand to hand combat with both men and women. And her daredevil adventures were hardly hampered by the fact that the scriptwriters were laboring under the impression that the language spoken in Brazil was Spanish and not Portuguese. The correct spelling of her name should've been Senhorita Rio.

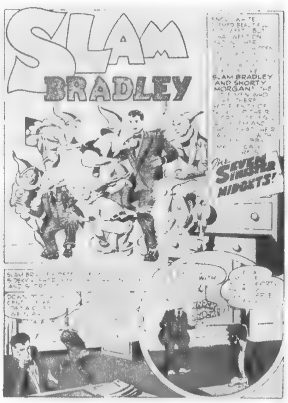
The first artist on the feature was Nick Cardy (still using his real name, Nick Viscardi), who'd just graduated from *Lady Luck*. He did an excellent job, devoting as much care to the backgrounds and props as he gave to the lady spy's figure. Artie Saaf followed him and then Lilly Renee, one of the more prolific though not especially gifted, lady artists of the GA.

The Private Eyes

Since one of our intentions in this magazine is to demonstrate that the Golden Age was much more than superheroes, we're inaugurating a new now and then department. Herein we'll pay attention to the numerous private investigators who gumshoed across the pages of the Thirties and Forties. Hardboiled dicks, sophisticated sleuths, masked marvels and an occasional buffoon will eventually get turns here. For our first entry we turn to a detective cooked up by Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster back in the old days before they sold Superman.



One of the earliest private investigators to operate in comic books, Slam Bradley was billed as an "ace freelance sleuth, fighter and adventurer" His first case, which involved him in mystery and murder in the bowels of Chinatown, was chronicled in *Detective Comics* #1 (March, 1937).



As his name hints, Slam was a rough and tumble operative who used his fists more often than he used a magnifying glass. He owed as much to Roy Crane's freewheeling soldier of fortune, Captain Easy, as he did to the private eyes of pulps and movies. And just as Easy had the diminutive Wash Tubbs as a sidekick, Slam had Shorty Morgan. They teamed up, after considerable show of reluctance on Slam's part, during that first case.

Unlike many private eyes of fiction, Slam Bradley rarely used a gun. He relied on his fists and his nerve to arrive at a solution. One early case begins with his chasing a suspect circus performer right up onto the fellow's trapeze, another with Slam crashing through a roof after a parachute jump. He and Shorty investigated crimes and misdemeanors in Hollywood, on Broadway, in Mexico and the Frozen North. Siegel and Shuster, being longtime science fiction buffs, eventually had their detective team getting involved with rocket ships, magic and even time travel. And it was on this feature that they began experimenting with the use of full page splash panels, a novelty in the 1930s, when most comic book layouts were as sedate as those of newspaper Sundays.

After Superman arrived and became a success, Shuster turned over the drawing of *Slam Bradley* to assistants. Then such artists as Mart Bailey and Dennis Neville took turns. With *Detective* #40 (June, 1940) Howard Sherman began his long association with the feature. He had an attractive style that blended cartoon and illustrational elements, giving the sort of light adventure look you find with the work of such European artists as Herge. Sherman had begun drawing the better-known Dr. Fate the month before. Slam and Shorty were occupying eight pages at the back of the book during this period, handling murders, kidnappings and assorted rackets with ease and humor. Shorty, who'd grown a bit taller by this time, was feisty and cynical and not always anxious to rush into danger. Slam remained as belligerent as ever.

By the middle 1940s, when artists such as John Daly and Martin Naydel were rendering the strip, the caseload was made up mostly of whimsical and slapstick crimes. Sherman returned in the postwar years to remain with Slam and Shorty until they solved their final case in *Detective* #152 (October, 1949).

DE FUCCIO AT LARGE

Tracking down vintage comic book artists who provided me with glorious surcease from my Latin and geometry worries, during my Prep school days, has always been a satisfying safari for me. The spoor may lead through a number of defunct comics publishing houses; their Editors and Publishers long since departed to that Great Drawing Board in the Sky.

A clue may pop up in the address book of Richard Hughes, Editor of the American Comics Group, which now reposes in the diligently-maintained Special Collections at Fairleigh-Dickinson University, in Madison, New Jersey. Company letterers and colorists are also reliable sources of what-became-of-so-and-so. Letterers, especially, such as the fabled Irving Watanabe, who filled balloons and even backgrounds at the elbow of Charles Biro, at times for forty-eight hour stretches, like an omnipresent trainer abetting a boxer, remembers vividly the characteristics, quirks and working habits of most of the long-ago Gleason-employed artists.

But, often, there may be no clues, and *then* it's like clam-digging in concrete.

The estimable Hames Ware, fellow Editor of Jerry Bails, on the ambitious Who's Who of American Comic Books series, was particularly vexed by a style of long-running comic art which was perpetually unsigned and unidentified. Soon, Hames was to call in another indefatigible comics sleuth on the case, Jim Vadeboncoeur of Palo Alto, California.

I had been unable to put a name to the art style which was so familiar to me. Now dubbed the "mystery artist" by Hames, the unknown was clearly one of the most prolific artists in comic books; a volume producer equalling the output of Bill Everett, Paul Gustavson and Jack Cole. His style was clean, crisp and somewhat photographic. He must have ranged from 1938 to 1955 in the business.

I first encountered his work in the oversized Fawcett *Master Comics*, doing an undersea salvage epic, Shipwreck Roberts. Then, in *Prize Comics*, turning out the Green Lama. His artwork manifested no "growing pains"; he seemed to adapt to the demanding comic books boom immediately. He was ready. He proceeded to Timely to do Captain Terror in *USA Comics* and one story of The Witness in the early *Mystic Comics*. The aforementioned were masked-and-caped, not his bag, doubtless a few quickies before going into the Armed Forces.

He reappeared, hot and heavy, after World War II, in both Hillman and Ziff-Davis publications. He was ap-

parently the great favorite of Editor Ed Cronin at Hillman. Cronin, only a passable artist himself, had been an Editor at Quality. He enticed some pretty fine artists to Hillman: Dan Barry, Fred Kida, John Cassone, Dick Rockwell, Bob Fuji, Tony Di Preta, Charles Biro, Gerald McCann, John Prentice, Harry Sahle and even Army-bound Al Jaffee, who did Wun Wing Spin, a delightful two-pager in the early *Air-Fighters*. If memory serves me, Harvey Kurtzman also worked for Cronin on Black Angel.

But, back to the "mystery artist", who was to do all manner of themes for Cronin: westerns, crime, frogmen, gladiators (Alpha the Slave Pirate in *Pirates*), true-life, sports and teenage. He was especially expressive at rustics, tinkers, drifters, con-men, roustabouts, carpetbaggers and Mexican liberators and banditos. He seemed to emulate some of Albert Dorne's rogues and rascals.

Resolutely, Hames Ware circulated copies of his published art, like a determined lawman with a WANTED poster.

I consulted former Hillman writer, Jack Oleck, who remembered doing Alpha the Slave, but not the artist who illustrated it. Hillman artist, Tony Di Preta, examined the tearsheet, but couldn't come up with a name. Even the astute Stan Lee misfired with the name "Al Eadeh". Couldn't be. Eadeh's work didn't match the "mystery man" in strength of line, composition or characterization.

Hames finally made a break-through with a journeyman inker, Burt Frohman. Frohman responded to a sample of the art and described the artist physically, though he couldn't recall the name. When Hames mentioned that the unknown had worked for both Hillman *and* Ziff-Davis, Frohman

rallied, "Get to Herb Rogoff. He was at both places and in a position to remember names, as he hired and fired at Ziff."

Luckily, Hames found that Herb Rogoff had responded to the original Who's Who questionnaire, in 1970, and his address was still good, as Rogoff lost no time in answering... on April 12, 1982....

Dear Hames:

The man you're looking for is Mike Sukorski *(not too sure of spelling, it's been a long time). Mike was from Newark, New Jersey area. He was a bachelor.*

Mike worked for me when I was with Hillman, as assistant to Ed Cronin. He did, indeed, draw for the books you mentioned.

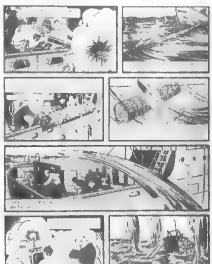
When I moved over to Ziff-Davis in 1950, the company was about to set the comic books industry on fire with loads of titles, paying the best rates in the business to artists and writers. Jerry Siegel was Editor at the time, he hired me, but was eased out by management. I began to edit G.I. Joe *and other titles. I brought Mike over to Ziff-Davis and paid him top rates, $50.00 per page. In an effort to get more work out of him, we suggested he just do pencilling and we'd have inkers finishing up. His pencil drawings were so detailed and clean, anyone could have inked them. Mike turned us down, choosing to do the complete job himself.*

His compositions were superb, his ability as a story-teller unmatched, in my opinion. It's too bad his work was confined to the comic books medium with its poor reproduction.

I know nothing about his personal life except that he was an avid fisherman.

One day, I called his number to check on a job and the phone was answered by his father, I was to learn. He told me Mike was dead, drowned while he was out fishing. This is all the information I have on him. He was short, blond thinning hair, slavic features. A grand person. I was deeply touched by news of his death....

Sincerely,
Herb Rogoff



Hames had mentioned that Mike had done two or three stories for Richard Hughes, at ACG. Both the Harry A. Chesler and Richard Hughes collections had been donated to the Fairleigh-Dickinson University Special Collections archives. I had thumbed

through Hughes' address book before, but it had been only a casual perusal. This time, February, 1984, Hames suggested that I look for any old address on Mike Sukorski, so we might contact any family members. I went straight to the S page, and there it was, with correct spelling... MIKE SUCHORSKY, Elizabeth, New Jersey.

I dialed the information operator in the Elizabeth area. No such listing. Bless the operator! There was a *George* Suchorsky, who lived in Clark, New Jersey.

I phoned immediately. Yes, George was Mike's brother. Mike drowned in the Delaware River, as did his fishing companion, in October, 1955. Mike was 41.

George Suchorsky extended me an invitation to visit. I could look at Mike's *serious* work; paintings and illustrations. *Those he signed.*

Mike Suchorsky—found at last!

G.I. Joe in The KILTIES ARE COMIN'
BAKER COMPANY MAKES A STRIKING CONTRIBUTION TO FACTS BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS WHEN THEY CAPTURE THE ENTIRE GERMAN 88th MILITARY AND PRIVATE JOE AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES THE MIDDLE OF HIS MAJESTY'S OWN DAMEON HIGHLANDERS, WHO HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FROM DRY ROT!
LISTEN, MULVANEY! IT SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE'S BEING TORTURED TO DEATH!
ANOTHER LOUSY RED TRICK! THEY WON'T EVEN LET A MAN SLEEP!
LOOK, SCOTSMEN!
NAIRTS, AND ALL! AND IF THEY DON'T EVEN TURN THEM INTO RED 'IN CHINA ON EVIL NECKS?
THE CORRECT WORD, KID, ME PROVINCIAL PUTTOCKS, IS SCOTSMEN! AND HE HAPPEN TO BE HEAR-D-N THE KILT-NOT SKIRT-OF HIS MAJESTY'S MAJOR MALTHUSIAN OF HIS MAJESTY'S DAMEON HIELANDERS!
LET US HAE ANOTHER CHACK WI' THEM REDS, LAD! MAGGIE, ON YE NO HEAR ANGUS, FIFIN' US TO BATTLE!
AYE, THE LADDIE'S IN FINE FETTLE! LET HIS GO FLOORAWAY, KILTS, SHRILIN' AND PIPES DARKIN'!
ARE YOU CRAZY? WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE QUIET! WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE THEY ARE!
SOOTH! AND DOUBLE SOOTH! NAE YE NOO HEAR THE PIPES?
ON YOUR FEET, YOU BUMS... WE JUST BEEN HAVE A NORMAL SCOTSMEN! CAN YE NO HEAR THE PEEPS?
W-, HE PLAYS THAT WINDBAG REAL PURTY, DON'T HE, JOE?
IT'S REAL HORRIBLE MUSIC -BUT IT SORTA GETS INSIDE YA!
MEANWHILE, THE REDS EXAMINE ONE OF THEIR PILES OF JUNK
RICE, TO EAT?
SO FERMA, FOOL!
IT'S STRONG!
BUT MOST INVIGORATING!

MIKE SUCHORSKY WORK SHEETS (Typical)

1952 Ed Cronin/Hillman
Title: John L. Sullivan 6 pages

Pencils Started	Tuesday, May 27th
Pencils Completed	Tuesday, June 3rd
Inks Started	Friday, June 6th
Inks Completed	Thursday morn, June 12th
Assignment Paid	June 23rd…$270.00

COVER FOR CRONIN 1952

Pencils Started	Thursday eve, Feb 14th
Inks Started	Friday noon, Feb. 15th
Inks Completed	Saturday noon, Feb. 16th
Assignment Paid	Feb 23rd … $50.00

****

1953 Ziff-Davis
G.I. Joe in "Blue-Plate Knockout" 5 pages

Pencils Started	Wednesday, January 28th
Pencils Completed	Tuesday, Feb 3rd
Inks Started	Wednesday, Feb 4th
Inks Completed	Tuesday morn, Feb 10th
Assignment Paid	Feb 18th … $225.00

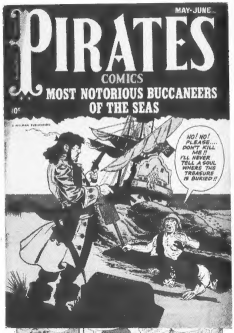
G.I. Joe in "The Last Letter" 6 Pages

Pencils Started	Wednesday, Feb 11th
Pencils Completed	Saturday, February 21st
Inks Started	Wednesday, March 4th
Inks Completed	Monday, March 9th
Assignment Paid	Friday, March 20th … $270.00

G.I. Joe in "Helmet 779" 5 Pages

Pencils Started	Tuesday, March 17th
Pencils Completed	Monday, March 23rd
Inks Started	Thursday, April 2nd
Inks Completed	Friday, April 10th
Assignment Paid	April 16th … $225.00

OOOHMANIGHT!! EVEN PAP WILLDA TAKEN OFF HIS HAT TO YOU!
WHERE'S MA PIPES? DESPERATION IS RUIN, MEDICINE IS FLOWER-R-R!
SUDDENLY THE TIRED AND BEATEN MEN HEAR THE STRAINS OF THE OLD HOME AND LAMENT FOR FALLEN WARRIORS ... THE FLOWERS OF THE FOREST ARE THE FIRST TO FALL ...


MAY-JUNE
PIRATES
COMICS
MOST NOTORIOUS BUCCANEERS OF THE SEAS
10¢
NO! NO! PLEASE... SHIVER ME TIMBERS... I'LL NEVER TELL WHERE I HIDES THE TREASURE IS BURIED!!

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THE GOLDEN AGE

NMP ™

EDITED BY RON GOULART

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